■ Metro / A15

100 Muslim volunteers to guard Manila churches during Holy Week

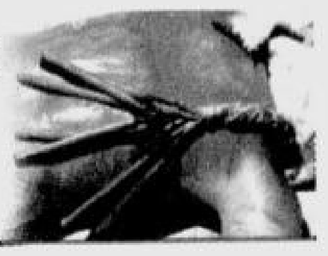
■ Business / B1

Forex deposits with RP banking system hit record high of $15.49B

■ News / A2

Baritone, pianist delight PDI with classical music

There'll be no Inquirer issues on Friday and Saturday in observance of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Publication resumes Easter Sunday



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Thursday, March 24, 2005 ★★ 36 pages / 3 sections
Vol. 20 / No. 106 P18

Ailing Pope makes 1-minute, silent appearance

VATICAN CITY—Looking gaunt, Pope John Paul II appeared at his open studio window Wednesday and blessed the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square.

In the approximately one-minute-long appearance, the ailing Pontiff raised his hand in blessing a few times but didn't speak.

The appearance began nearly 15 minutes after the time the Vatican said it would start. There was no immediate explanation for the delay.

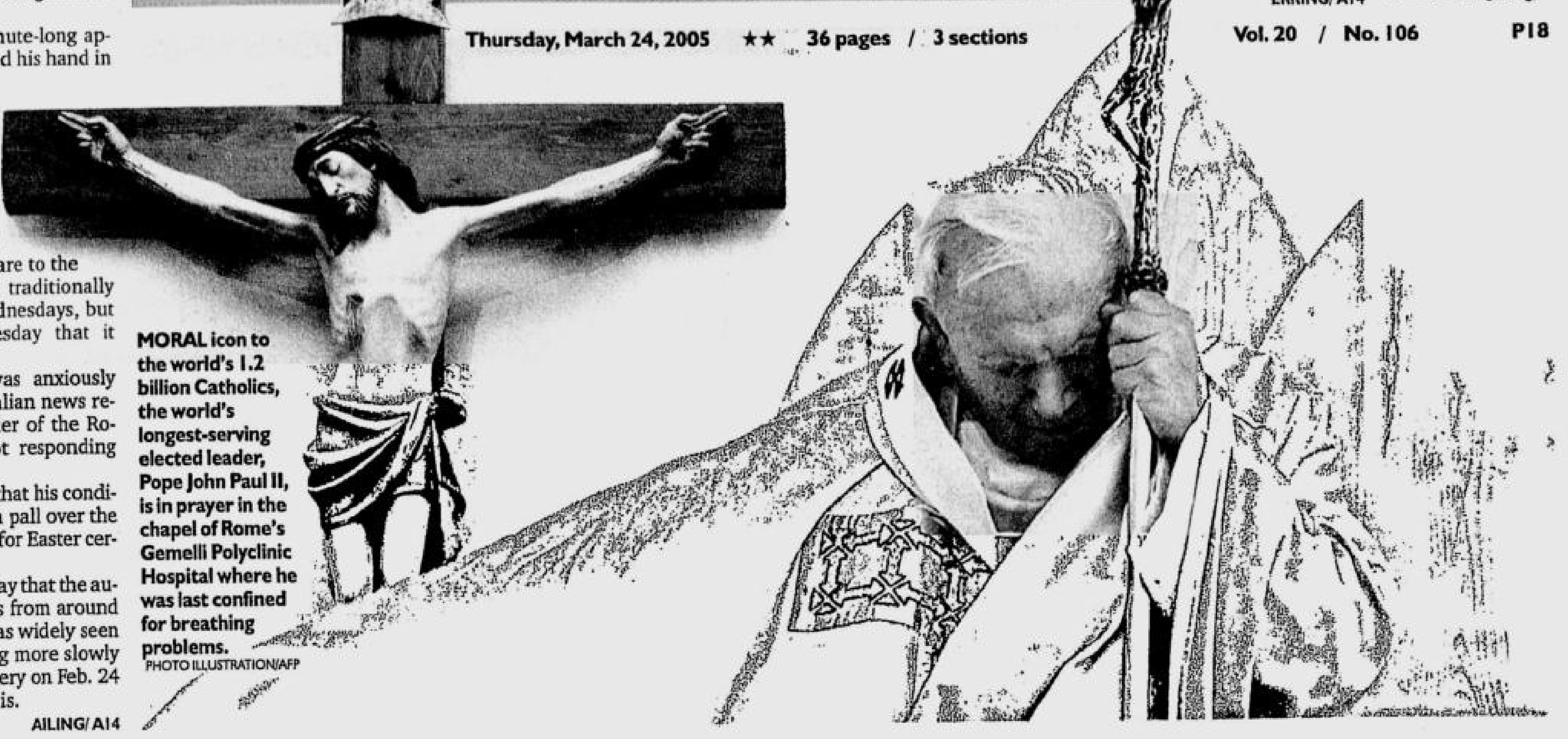
Thousands of pilgrims and tourists looked up from the square to the third floor window. John Paul traditionally holds a public audience on Wednesdays, but the Vatican had said on Tuesday that it wouldn't be held this week.

The Pontiff's appearance was anxiously awaited by the faithful after Italian news reports that the 84-year-old leader of the Roman Catholic Church was not responding well to medication.

These reports, which hinted that his condition was worsening, have cast a pall over the Catholic Church's preparations for Easter ceremonies.

The announcement on Tuesday that the audience so popular with pilgrims from around the world would not be held was widely seen as a sign that he was recovering more slowly than expected from throat surgery on Feb. 24 aimed at easing a breathing crisis.

AILING/ A14

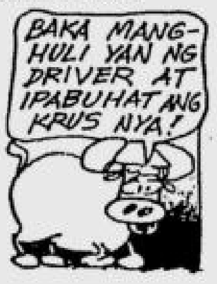


MORAL icon to the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, the world's longest-serving elected leader, Pope John Paul II, is in prayer in the chapel of Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic Hospital where he was last confined for breathing problems.
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/AFP

Erring policemen told to join crucifixion rites

ERRING policemen facing dismissal have been given a novel option for keeping their jobs: Show repentance by carrying a cross or volunteering for

ERRING/ A14


BAKA MANG-HULI YAN NG DRIVER AT IPABUHAT ANG KRUS NYA!

10 sacks of explosives seized

18 canisters of bomb materials also confiscated

By Dona Pazzibugan

PACKED in 10 sacks, they could have been used to make a car bomb with enough power to blow up a two-story building or maim an untold number of people if set off in a crowded place.

They were intended to be used to bomb "soft" or lightly guarded targets in Metro Manila, possibly this Holy Week.

The military said yesterday these were the key elements of a major plot by the Abu Sayyaf Group to sow terror in the metropolis this Lenten season but this had been thwarted with the seizure of the explosives and the arrest of one plotter.

The discovery of the explosives coincided with warnings from diplomats that terrorists were "on the final stages of planning an attack" in the country.

Besides the 10 sacks of explosives, intelligence agents also confiscated 18 canisters of improvised explosive devices, one personal computer and a video camera with several tapes in an apartment on Lilac Street, in Fairview, Quezon City.

The military presented the explosives to media at Camp Aguinaldo amid a nationwide alert against retaliatory attacks by the Abu Sayyaf following the killing of 22 suspected ASG members during a failed jailbreak last week.

"The explosives are intended to be used during this Lenten season to bomb soft targets within Metro Manila," the military said.

Police earlier said possible targets included churches, malls and other heavily populated places.

An alleged conspirator, Tyrone Dave Santos, also known as Daud Santos, was also apprehended in Cubao, Quezon City.

Santos' arrest led to the discovery of the explosives in Fairview, Quezon City, officials said.

"The capture of Santos and the sub-

10 SACKS/ A13

Suspect says Abu plans to hit crowded places

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

IN A NEW campaign of terror, the Abu Sayyaf has sent out orders to bombers to blow up crowded places in Metro Manila and in a city in Mindanao in the last week of this month.

The plotters included elements within the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, one of whom was paid P100,000 to help carry out the attacks.

Captured Indonesian bombing suspect Rohmat, also known as Zaki, made these disclosures in one of rare interviews which the military allowed media to have with suspected terrorists.

According to Rohmat, top ASG leader Khadafy Janjalani and Commander Abu

SUSPECT/ A13

BOMB expert Lt. Col. Lito Tabangcura holds up one of 18 canisters of improvised explosives found in Fairview, Quezon City. VAL HANDUMON

Today's view: What conflict of interest?

By Fe B. Zamora

REP. TEODORO "Teddyboy" Locsin had never meddled in the "treatment of stories" while he was publisher of Today, former Today editor in chief Lourdes "Chuchay" Fernandez said yesterday, defending Locsin from accusations that being publisher and legislator at the same time was a "conflict of interest."

Locsin was accused of having a "conflict of interest" by the Manila Standard Employees Association (MSEA), who opposed his appointment as publisher of the Manila Standard Today, a broadsheet that combined the Manila Standard which is majority-owned by businessman Enrique Razon, and Today, which Locsin owned with Rep. Manny Zamora and businessman Tony Boy Cojuangco.

Fernandez, who has assumed the position as co-managing editor of the Manila Standard Today, said she had "never known of an instance when Teddyboy actually meddled with the editors on the treatment of a story."

"That's why I am completely

TODAY'S/ A7

Cardinal's passion: Visiting poor in village of Sin

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE FRAIL figure alighting from the white sedan is an all-too-familiar sight to residents of this poor community in Punta, Sta. Ana, Manila.

At least three times a week, retired Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin visits this place which some have aptly called "The Village of Sin."

When he comes, the people receive him like a celebrity, if not a king.

Sin, 76, has made the two-hectare Cardinal Sin Village his second home away from Villa San Miguel, his Mandaluyong retreat for more than three decades.

He built the village for some 500 residents of Punta, one of the poorest communities in the capital city, soon after he retired from the Archdiocese of Manila two years ago.

This is where he now finds the strength to withstand the exactions of a lingering kidney ailment and heart problem.

"He comes usually in the morning and somehow feels rejuvenated just by observing the community," said Peachy Yamsuan, the communications director of the Archdiocese of Manila.

Sin usually arrives not later than 9 a.m. As soon as he gets off the car, children would swarm around him, becoming his instant entourage as he goes on a tour of the village, checking on the houses and the ongoing construction.

"He really loves the kids," said

CARDINAL'S/ A7

Luminous Cross of Grace rising in Quezon town

FIERY reformer Fr. Raul "Puti" Enriquez with scale model of "God's masterpiece."

By Ruby Villavicencio Paurom
Contributor

A TOWER of lights is rising in Agdangan, an obscure, coastal town in Quezon province not known for any historic landmark, festival, or delicacy.

Named the Luminous Cross of Grace Sanctuary, it is being built on land adjoining the town's San Isidro Labrador Parish Church.

When completed, it will soar 120 feet, like 12 stories high with a panoramic view of Mt. Banahaw and the plains of Quezon and Tayabas Bay.

The sanctuary is designed to look like a monstrance with the circular figure of the Holy Eucharist at its center.

On top of the dome will sit an eight-meter high cross that will be visible for kilometers around.

At night, it will be illuminated by a 1,000-foot light beam powered by a solar generator and spotlights at its foot.

LUMINOUS/ A14

Jesus' faces subsidize missionaries

By D.J. Yap and Minerva Generalao

FACES: Christ and artist Rey Contreras VAL HANDUMON

SOME 300 wood sculptures depicting the face of Jesus in various moods have given a new lease on the life and work of a group of missionaries in the country.

The sculptures were made by Rey Paz Contreras, who is also known for his pro-people and pro-Filipino art. He has donated the sculptures, which have since become known as "Rostros de Jesus" (from the Spanish word *rostro*, meaning face) to the Missionaries of Jesus group.

JESUS'/ A7

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern Luzon and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/24/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONTPAGE

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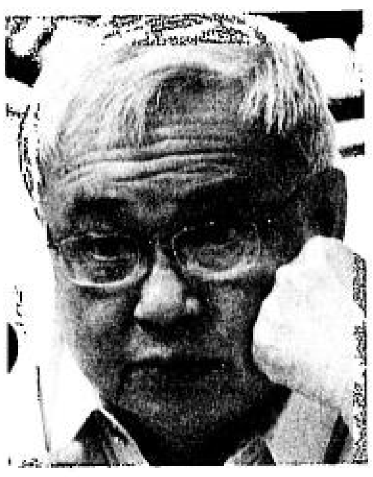
Road to VAT becoming war path for senators, top Palace execs

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.



ARROYO

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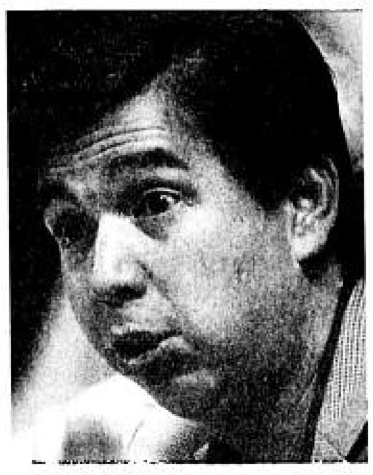


RECTO

APPARENTLY fed up with the delay in the passage of the bill to restructure the value-added tax system, Malacañang yesterday derided senators for doing a "Pontius Pilate" and washing their hands of their primary duty to raise taxes and solve the fiscal crisis.

A top Malacañang official, who asked not to be identified, said the senators were afraid of hurting their chances of reelection and were now passing on the burden of approving an increase in the VAT rate from 10 percent to 12 percent to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

This came as the US-based investment bank Credit Suisse First Boston said it believed the Senate might be out to seek a compromise to break the VAT reform stand-off by giving the President authority to raise the VAT rate.

"In times of fiscal distress and high debt service costs, our conversations on the ground indicate that the Philippine Constitution does allow the President to design tax policy. In this way, the Senate passes on the buck of a possible populist backlash to the President. Meanwhile, the President can claim victory highlighting that she is able to implement tough tax measures," CSFB said in its March 21 report.

The Malacañang official said the senators not only knew that approving tax reforms was part of their duty, they have also been made aware of the importance of the VAT reforms in solving the country's fiscal woes.

"They cannot act like Pontius Pilate on this issue, this is important to our country," the official said, blaming the senators for the stock market and peso's fall.

Although the Malacañang official did not mention any senator by name, it was obvious that the Palace was targeting the President's supposed allies in the chamber who have refused to give their approval to a VAT rate hike for fear of hurting their chances in the 2007 elections.

The reelectionist senators belonging to the administration coalition are Senators Joker Arroyo, Manuel Villar, Francis Pangilinan and Ralph Recto.

These four senators favor keeping the VAT rate at 10 percent while endorsing the removal of VAT exemptions enjoyed by petroleum and power firms and professionals. They claimed this would be enough to meet the President's goal of raising P80 billion in new revenues.

There were high hopes after the May 10 election that the President would have an easier time pushing her legislative reform program when her allies emerged victorious in the congressional and Senate races.

But this turned out to be a matter of false hopes as the senators, who are elected at large, have made a big show of being independent of the Executive and of pandering to populist issues.

After the Senate failed to pass its version of the VAT reform bill before the chamber took a Lenten vacation, the President piled on the pressure by declaring that the implementation of her pro-poor programs were dependent on the approval of the fiscal-reform measures, particularly the VAT rate hike.

Malacañang also warned that every week of delay in the passage of the VAT would cost the government P1.25 billion in forgone revenues.

The President also called Congress to a three-day special session from March 30 to April 1 specifically to work on the passage of the VAT bill.

House Assistant Majority Leader Antonio Cerilles yesterday dismissed fears that the House would not be able to muster a quorum for the special session.

Senator Arroyo had said the special session was useless because the House could not muster a quorum anyway. *With a report from Philip C. Tubeza*

Transport strike set Easter Sunday vs NLEx toll

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A Central Luzon-wide transport strike to begin at 12:01 a.m. on Monday will start the filing of a case asking the Supreme Court to nullify the contract of the Manila North Tollways Corp. to operate the North Luzon Expressway, transport leaders here said on Wednesday.

As transport services by jeepney, bus, mini-bus and tricycle federations grind to a halt, a big contingent of the region's 900,000 drivers will start a motorcade by 9 a.m. to file the case before the Supreme Court, said Tom Talavera, national spokesperson of the Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator sa Pilipinas (STOP).

The Alyansa ng Mamamayan at Transport Sector Laban sa NLEx Toll Fee Hike (Aklas), the alliance to which STOP belongs, is spearheading the legal action.

Fifth case

It is the fifth case filed by several groups, including Bulacan Rep. Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado, since Feb. 10 when the MNTC took over the management of the 84-km highway from the state-owned Philippine National Construction Corp.

"Privatizing a vital infrastructure is already a questionable action of the Arroyo government for abandoning its duty to provide services. Facts also prove the sale of the NLEx franchise between the government and the MNTC that it is unconstitutional without any public bidding and congressional approval," said Aurora Broquil of the Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya, another Aklas member.

Broquil said PNCC's franchise would end in 2007.

The MNTC earlier said the franchise is still owned by the PNCC, which is a member of the joint venture. The others are the First Philippine Infrastructure Development Corp. of the Lopez Group, the Egis Projects of France and the Leighton Asia Limited of Australia.

Ramos-approved

The project's Supplemental Toll Operating Agreement (Stoa), signed by former President Fidel Ramos in 1998, mandated the resulting partnership to finance, rehabilitate, operate and maintain the NLEx for 30 years.

The MNTC reported spending P18.3 billion on the rehabilitation, widening and facilities.

"It has become more of a business venture instead of a service," Broquil said.

The MNTC pegged the increase in toll rates at 500 percent from PNCC's rates. The new rates prompted a P5 to P20 increase in fares in jeepneys and buses plying the improved highway.

Aklas estimated that the Lopez-led MNTC can "recover its capital in just four years of operations." *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Baritone, pianist treat PDI to classics

INQUIRER employees were treated last Tuesday to the amazing sight of a grand piano being carried by 10 men up the 24 steps to the PDI building's second-floor lobby.

The occasion was a special performance by baritone Noel Azcona, the first time that the INQUIRER was hosting a full recital by a baritone.

Azcona opened the Holy Tuesday concert quite aptly with the Handel oratorio.

He was accompanied by pianist Najib Ismail in a repertoire that included Mozart, Donizetti, Carissimi, Leoncavallo and Abelardo, among others.

"This special performance is a welcome respite, coming as it does toward the end of the first quarter and before we go on our annual Lenten break," said publisher Isagani Yambot.

Yambot said Azcona's voice was "undeniably world class."

"His PDI concert was a real big treat," said PDI Entertainment editor Emmie Velarde.

"It's great singing here," said Azcona who noted that the PDI building had excellent acoustics.

A member of the renowned UST Singers, Azcona made his first solo recital at the 3rd Pasig Summer Music Festival last year and was promptly declared "the most exciting baritone of the year."

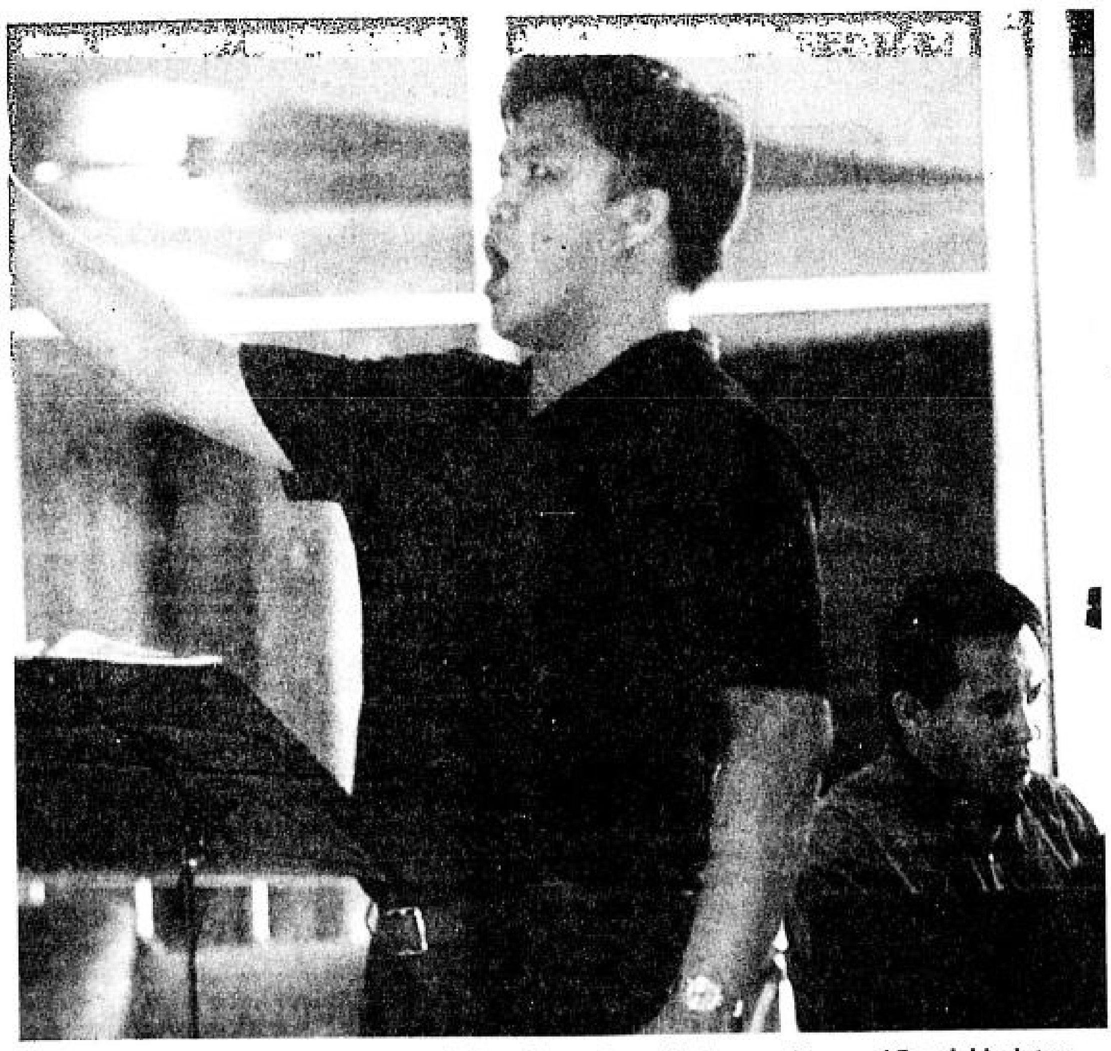
He was given a standing ovation in Cagayan during the opening of the Best of the Philippines Concert Tour recently.

A front-row spectator at Tuesday's concert was PDI reader Dr. Leticia Enrile Tolentino who had driven all the way from San Juan for it.

"Azcona's voice really made my day. I am glad I made it to this concert," she said.

Azcona and Ismail will perform in the Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija on Sunday, March 27. The Catanduanes provincial government, under Gov. Leandro Verceles Jr., will be presenting the duo in a concert in Virac the following Sunday, April 3.

Azcona is all set to leave for another international tour with the UST singers under professor Fidel Gener Calalang Jr. *Pablo A. Tariman, Contributor*



BARITONE Noel Azcona and pianist Najib Ismail transform the INQUIRER's second floor lobby into a concert hall on a Holy Tuesday. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

PHOTO SEMINAR

THE FIRST Couple pose for a picture with members of the Press Photographers of the Philippines, led by its president, INQUIRER's Boy Cabrido, during the PPP's recent "Photojournalism Impact" seminar. Ms Arroyo and husband Mike, a photo enthusiast, attended the seminar and expressed interest in the photojournalists' work. VAL HANDUMON

GMA, Cabinet hear Mass, reflect on Holy Week in Palace retreat

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo and members of her Cabinet gathered on Holy Tuesday, taking time out to hear Mass, pray and reflect for the Holy Week.

The four-hour spiritual retreat, held inside Bahay Pangarap along Malacañang Park, saw the President and her official family hearing Mass, praying and listening to songs and spiritual talk.

"It was primarily the President's retreat but it was open to Cabinet members and a few friends of the President," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said yesterday.

Aside from Bunye, among the Cabinet members present were Vice President and Housing Secretary Noli de Castro, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes, and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

Gonzalez said that a priest gave them a really good talk.

"He talked about not only about our duties as public officials but also of nationalism," Gonzalez said in a phone interview Tuesday night.

He said aside from Cabinet members, also present were the presidential staff.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo retreats to her old self making the rounds of urban poor communities, this time on the NorthRail site in Barangay Tugatog, Malabon City. EDWIN BACASMAS

Leftist solon makes Lenten appeal to GMA: Stop killings

By Philip Tubeza

ANAKPAWIS party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano yesterday made a Lenten appeal to President Macapagal-Arroyo: stop the killing of leftist activists.

Mariano made the call after another activist, human rights lawyer Charles Juloya, was shot by unidentified assailants on Tuesday in Aringay, La Union while he was on his way to the wake of another slain militant.

Juloya survived the attack but suffered six gunshot wounds. Since the beginning of the year, 18 leftist activists have been killed in the country.

"It appears that Ms Macapagal is not disturbed by the terror attacks against legitimate people's organizations. Is her silence meant to commend the killings?" Mariano said.

"Up to now, the President has no clear and categorical statement on the spate of killings of political activists," he added.

Mariano said Juloya was on his way to the wake of Romy Sanchez, Bayan Muna coordinator for the Ilocos region, who was killed last March 9 in Baguio City.

Juloya, also the convenor of the "Justice for Romy Sanchez Movement," was set to talk with leaders of militant groups in Ilocos.

Mariano said the killings all occurred in places considered to be the safest for activists.

"The message of the killings is very loud and clear. These were meant to inflict terror on the militant people's movement," he added.

4-day workweek seen answer to fund woes

By Ronnel W. Domingo

GOVERNMENT employees would enjoy long weekends in the next two months as Malacañang announced it was implementing a four-day workweek for national government agencies to save on electricity and fuel expenses.

Energy Secretary Raphael PM Lotilla said in a press briefing yesterday the Department of Budget and Management was expected next week to issue the implementing rules for the program, which would run from April 1 until the end of May.

Lotilla said the timing considered the period when electricity consumption is at its peak due to increased use of air-conditioners, fans and other appliances for cooling buildings and work areas.

He said the government's total demand for power increase by 100 megawatts for every one-degree-centigrade increase in temperature. In turn, the increased consumption translates to 125 barrels of fuel per hour.

"To ensure that the quality of government service would not be compromised, the program is designed such that government employees would still work at a minimum of 40 hours a week," he said.

Lotilla said the Cabinet was considering stretching the workday in line daylight hours. "It may be possible to start the day at 6 a.m. for instance," he said.

But he said there would be no changes in the work schedule of those rendering "frontline" services, such as hospital personnel.

The scheme would be applied to agencies where it is applicable, he said.

Lotilla said the four-day workweek would enable employees to save on transport and other expenses.

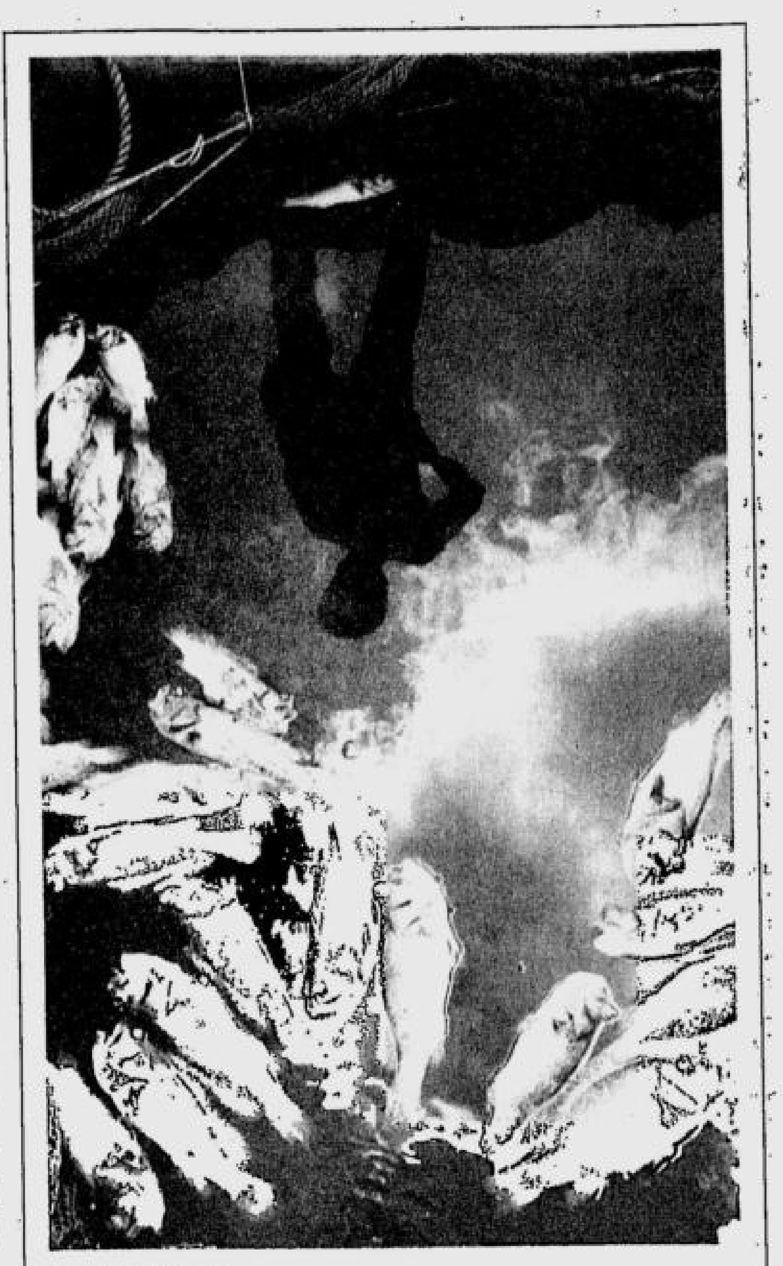
"This would also give more quality time to their families and encourage them to use their three-day break for other social and economic activities," he said.

"We are doing this not because there is a short supply of or a possible crisis regarding fuel," Lotilla said. "This is all about savings."

The official said the temporary scheme was expected to translate into a reduction of the national agencies' power and fuel consumption by 10 percent.

He said a study showed that an office, such as the Department of Energy with about 600 employees, could save an estimated P166,400 in electricity costs and P81,800 in fuel expenses if it followed a four-day work week for two months.

"This would require a change in our lifestyle and in the way we do things," Lotilla said.



POLLUTION
Dead fish litter the pond whose waters contain high levels of pollutants from surrounding industrial firms in Labogon Mandaue City in Central Philippines. The dejected owner is reflected on the water.

TONEE DESPOJO/CDN

Loi gets ally in Palace on US detention

LOI EJERCITO

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG yesterday found itself siding with a political foe, as it expressed concern over the way Sen. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito was treated by US immigration personnel upon her arrival in California last March 20.

"We are concerned over this incident and we acknowledge the statement of (US) Ambassador (Francis) Ricciardone expressing regrets and...assurances that this will be looked into," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye said Filipino lawmakers "deserve some respect in foreign soil in the same manner that all foreign government officials and diplomats enjoy the respect and courtesies due them in our country."

Ejercito denounced the shabby treatment given her by US immigration personnel who detained and interrogated her for one and a half hours.

She arrived in San Francisco with her daughter and grandchildren last March 20.

Ricciardone and the US state department in Washington have since apologized.

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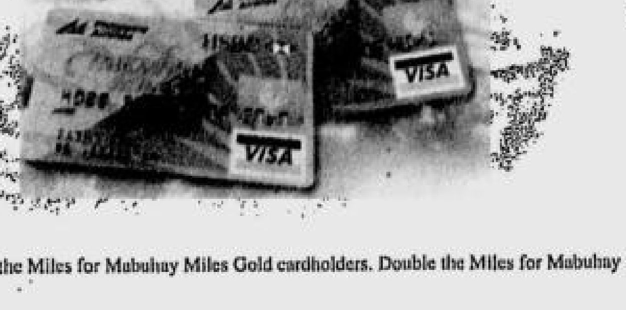

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SURIYA
URBANSPA
PINNACLE
RED BOX KARAOKE
THE FARM AT SAN BENITO

Automotive

Manila Imperial Motor Sales

US pro-life leader warns of abortion in new bill

By Christian V. Esguerra

FIRST legalized contraception. Next legalized abortion.

An American pro-life activist has warned the government against passing the controversial Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005 (House Bill 3773), saying it would eventually pave the way for an abortion law.

"All 118 countries that legalized contraception eventually legalized abortion," Dr. Brian Clowes, Human Life International's manager for research, told the INQUIRER.

Contraceptives are a key part of HB 3773 now being deliberated at the House of Representatives, along with the so-called "Pinoy-style" divorce law filed by party-list Rep. Liza Maza.

Clowes cited the purported experience of the United States after its government introduced contraceptives in 1965.

At least 20,000 deaths due to complications from birth control pills have been recorded while a quarter of American women getting married at age 25 have "incurable" sexually transmitted diseases, he claimed.

Not effective

That's because condoms, for instance, were not as effective as their promoters had claimed, he explained.

"Yes, you can use condoms to stop AIDS and pregnancy," he said in a forum last week. "But you have to wear 33 of them. Do the mathematics and you'll be safe."

For all its supposedly bad decisions, Clowes said the US government now spends $700 million daily to "clean up after the public health implications of all these anti-life tactics and anti-life practices."

"I've been in the Philippines six times and if this is going to be another American state no different from the US, there would be no reason for me to come back because, the country would have lost its magic," he said.

Clowes' pronouncements about abortion incensed Rey Carmelo Remonde of the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines (FPOP).

In the forum organized by the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference, the American suggested that Remonde's group could be unwittingly advocating abortion on the basis of its affiliation with the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

In his "Kissinger Report 2004," an expose on the US government's purported hand in the population-control policies of Third World countries, Clowes described the IPPF as the "largest international promoter of abortion and other means of family planning."

Based in London, the IPPF has more than 180 family planning association's worldwide, including the FPOP.

Clowes said a provision in the Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights of which the IPPF was a key player reads: "All persons have the right to comprehensive health care services including access to all methods of fertility regulation, including safe abortion."

Remonde said his group has its "own goals in the Philippines" not necessarily similar to the IPPF's.

"Please take note, sir, that in the Philippines, abortion is a criminal act," he explained. "Every member of any federation has the right to remain against the mission of the mother organization."

SPREADING GOD'S WORD

200,000 OFWs seen potential missionaries

By Christian Esguerra

THE COUNTRY'S acknowledged modern-day heroes could soon be its newest set of missionaries.

Around 200,000 Overseas Filipino Workers are being mobilized to work as "God's ambassadors" in at least 194 countries, according to the head of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC).

"What we want to see is that every Filipino who leaves to work abroad should not go there only to earn dollars," Bishop Efraim Tendero told the INQUIRER in a recent interview.

"They should also be able to see themselves as God's ambassadors wherever they are."

Unlike regular preachers, OFWs would not find much difficulty getting into "closed" countries—territories that refuse to grant missionary visas because of their religious and political persuasions, he explained.

And while only a pathetic one percent of the world's total number of missionaries are based in closed countries like China, as many as three million Filipinos work there, the bishop pointed out.

"Filipinos are able to come there because visa and support are already provided by their employers," he said.

"So if we can help them have that perspective of how they could be used by God to declare the message of salvation and Christ."

Tendero said the idea of tapping OFWs came more than five years ago. But it was only now that there is a concerted effort among the PCEC's 20,000 affiliate churches, following a number of "success stories" abroad, he said.

In Hong Kong in early 2000, a female domestic helper endeared herself with the child of her Chinese employers soon after she made him watch a film about Jesus one rainy morning.

"Who's Jesus?" the boy asked his "yaya" after he saw the part wherein Jesus was depicted as calming the storm.

"Can he also make the storm go away so I could go to school?"

The Filipino worker knelt and prayed. The rain stopped.

"When the parents arrived, the boy told them about Jesus," Tendero said, citing the OFW for her inadvertent missionary work.

Another story was about an OFW working also as a helper for a family in a Middle-Eastern country.

"She was teaching the children about the Bible so her employers got mad and kicked her out," Tendero said.

"But they soon sent for her in the Philippines if only to appease their kids who had been crying since she left."

As OFWs, Filipinos are in a good position to become "bi-vocational" or "tent-maker missionaries," he said, referring to the Apostle Paul's missionary work that went with his being a tent-maker in Corinth in the New Testament.

So while they work as, say, nurses and engineers, they could also be "used to send the message of Jesus Christ," he said.

Chosen OFWs would go through missionary education to equip them with the proper "skills, character, and knowledge," he said.

FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS

IN the 17th year of kite flying in Naujan town, inmates show their kites, including Ed Serrano's NDF design entries.
MADONNA T. VIROLA/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Colors of kites from jail fill Mindoro skies

By Madonna T. Virola
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

CITY OF CALAPAN—These days, one would usually see different colors in the sky here and in other parts of Mindoro island.

At this time of year, kites of different colors, sizes and shapes dominate the Mindoro sky.

In fact, there will be a kite-flying contest in Naujan town on Easter Sunday.

Kite flying is good from January to June, said inmates of the Oriental Mindoro provincial Jail (OMPJ).

They should know. They are the ones who make and sell these kites as one of their seven forms of livelihood, making OMPJ look less like a jail under the new entrepreneurial leadership of retired Supt. Rolando O. Gonzales, now the provincial warden.

There are 325 inmates here, 28 are women. Majority of the inmates are facing illegal drug-related cases.

"The kite-making project is an alternative to making Christmas decors out of abaca, which are seasonal," said Gonzalez. The OMPJ inmates have made a name in Christmas decors.

Innovative

More guests also come to the jail these days as children insist on their parents to take them to jail visits and buy them kites of their preferred designs. Batman and Superman designs sell like hot cakes.

Kites come in two major skeletal designs: a butterfly and a bird. They are hung around the shades at the jail compound.

Inmates innovate with colors and accents of the kite body.

The latest is the design of a box sold recently at P100. The prices range from P20 to P100.

"The cheapest price is good for small kids, just to be placed in front of an electric fan and run in a small space," said inmate Cipriano Macalalad, 44.

Yana Faye Anorico, 3, was very happy with her kite. "I wish I had two," she said.

Start

Ferdinand Ferancullo, assistant provincial warden, said kite-making here was started by Elmar Asi, 52, in 1998.

"PG2 (prison guard 2) Dennis Abas brought samples from Pinamalayan jail and we made them as models," said Asi.

There are three jails in the province: the OMPJ, the one in Pinamalayan, with 92 inmates, and the other in Roxas, which has 53 inmates.

The Roxas jail inmates are not producing kites because the space there is only about 100 square meters. Pinamalayan jail is about 600-800 sqm and the OMPJ is about 3,000 sqm.

Ferrancullo said that last year, a big yellow kite with phrases "Provincial Jail" and "Laya na siya" printed on it, was taken out for a test by three people.

It successfully flew but crashed later.

Each kite is tested for quality. Wherever it drops, it is given away for free.

But there are kids who have returned the tested kites to the jail, knowing that these belonged to the inmates.

Income

"I have earned P4,000 gross (P2,500 net) since January this year. I have a helper and I can finish five kites in a day," said Macalalad.

The capital per kite is P20: P8-P10 for black garbage plastic, while the rest of the amount is for bamboo sticks, mosquito killer for gluing and nylon chord.

Garbage plastic with other colors is priced at P12. When bought inside the jail, it is P14.

Macalalad sells a kite at P70 to a sales agent, usually a fellow inmate.

The father of a barangay captain here, who refused to be named, gives bamboo pieces as materials for kite making. Some jail visitors bring pieces of bamboo for the skeleton.

An average kite is made in five hours by an inmate. Macalalad's cutter earns P100 after six days of work.

"We take P2 from the authorized seller for the inmates' funds. More than P400 have been collected, excluding those sent to their families," said Ferrancullo.

Like another inmate, Pedro Merhan, Macalalad continues working in the evening in his cell.

NDF kites

Eduardo Serrano, who calls himself a political detainee, showed his kites with the NDF (National Democratic Front) design.

"These kites (about two are made of eagle skeletons) will be used in a rally in Manila on April 24, during the anniversary of the NDF," Serrano said.

He explained that the three stars in each kite are for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. A delta in the middle of the triangle means unity and change. The colors of the Philippine flag are used, except that the red color is on top, to symbolize war.

"K," for "kalayaan" (freedom) serves like laces.

"Others imitate, and some improve their designs, like *'yung isa ay may palong ang ulo ng manok*," said Serrano.

"This is a skill [that could be used] after jail. *Paglaya mo, may alam ka, maigagawa mo rin ang anak mo* (When an inmate is released, he knows something, he could produce one for his kid)," said Macalalad, who never had a kite as a boy.

Other livelihood

More than half of the jail's population are hooked into kite-making.

But for those who are not inclined to kite making, there are the frames to be made out of *tambo* stalk, *tambo* broom making, a variety mini-store (there is a *tiyangihan* inside as each of the eight cells was given P1,000 capital by Gonzalez), cooking of food by a women's group chaired by Pinky Gequinto, abaca thread making for export, and laundry services.

"With several livelihood projects here, only the lazy ones will not earn," said Ferrancullo.

Those interested in the projects may contact the OMPJ at 043-288-7154.

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2 legislators urge bigger gov't share in Malampaya

By Michael Lim Ubac

TWO congressmen yesterday called on Malacañang to increase government's share in the Malampaya Natural Gas Project in Palawan after a ranking Saudi official said it could not give discounts on oil prices to developing countries like the Philippines.

Representatives Antonio C. Alvarez (lst district, Palawan) and Jacinto Paras (1st district, Negros Oriental) said that the government should invest heavily on local sources of energy to lessen dependence on imported oil.

Visiting Saudi Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi said on Monday that world crude oil prices were too high but his country could not do anything to ease prices even if it raised its output.

After a luncheon meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang, Al-Naimi, chair of Saudi Aramco which holds a 40 percent stake in the country's biggest oil refiner Petron Corp., told reporters that his country could not sell its prized commodity at a discount even to developing countries.

Garage sale

Alvarez and Paras then called the attention of President Macapagal-Arroyo to the reported plan of the energy department to sell 4.9 percent of the total shares in the Malampaya Natural Gas Project in Palawan held by the Philippine government through the Philippine National Oil Co.-Exploration Corp.

They said the move was uncalled for and ran counter to the policy of developing alternative sources of energy to soften the impact of rising world crude oil prices.

The two lawmakers disclosed that the government planned to sell its shares in the project for "only" $200 million, "a price that is not at par with present market value."

The two filed a resolution last week seeking an investigation by the House of Representatives committee on oversight "on what could possibly be another sweetheart deal" between the government and a foreign entity.

Negotiated bidding

Alvarez and Paras said that the sale—besides being supposedly underpriced—would be made through a negotiated bidding.

The project supplies gas from the Malampaya in Palawan to some power generators in Luzon.

"The privatization of the shares does not seem to be advantageous to the government in the long term considering that the Malampaya Natural Gas Project is one of the few assets of the GOP (Government of the Philippines) that is actually earning revenues for the government," Alvarez and Paras said in their resolution.

They said that another suspicious aspect of the whole transaction was the alleged announcement made by the Korean company in Singapore that it was the "preferred bidder" for the shares.

They also said that the Philippine government had not made any official announcement that it was negotiating with any group for the sale of the Malampaya shares.

Job seekers told: Have legal papers for Malaysia

By Jerome Aning

THERE are plenty of jobs available to migrant workers in Malaysia and Filipinos need only to undergo the normal and legal processes to be able to get there, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said yesterday.

Sto. Tomas' reaction followed reports that Filipinos were again sneaking back to Malaysia without documentation. She reiterated the severe penalties that would be meted on illegally-staying and undocumented aliens under Malaysia's new immigration law.

Human rights groups said Filipinos caught illegally staying in Malaysia are whipped.

The DOLE chief called on Filipino workers who wanted to go back to Malaysia to first register and acquire proper papers at the agency's one-stop processing centers in Zamboanga City and Bongao, Tawi-tawi.

The secretary, citing the report of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Kuala Lumpur, said many job vacancies await returning migrant workers in many Malaysian industries, particularly in component manufacturing.

Labor shortage

Malaysian Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr. Fong Chan Onn said the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of Malaysia—including even the Indian-Muslim restaurants—were hardest hit by the sudden departure of their undocumented workers following the end of the government-imposed amnesty period last month.

The industrial and SME sectors need a combined 108,000 foreign workers, Onn said.

Sto. Tomas said Filipino workers should take advantage of the Malaysian government's moves to end its foreign labor shortage and resume the growth of its industries.

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Arabs to relaunch peace offer to Israel

ALGIERS—Arab leaders agreed on Tuesday to relaunch a Middle East peace initiative offering Israel normal relations in return for withdrawal to its 1967 borders, officials said at a summit meeting in Algiers.

The formal relaunch of the 2002 initiative, which Israel has repeatedly rejected, will take place on Wednesday in the closing session of the two-day meeting, they said.

But all 22 members of the Arab League have agreed to a final communique which sets out the conditions Israel must meet for all Arab states to declare the Arab-Israeli conflict over.

Jordanian Foreign Minister Hani al-Mulki said that the final communique had been approved and would be officially endorsed on Wednesday.

Jordan was the driving force behind the relaunch, designed to show Israeli and international public opinion that the Arab states have peaceful intentions.

But Israel said on Monday that the plan was a "non-starter" and Arab states should start negotiations without conditions.

Washington's response was lukewarm.

"The United States, as a matter of policy, supports "as broad a recognition of Israel as possible," State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said.

But asked why the US was not speaking supportively of the Arab proposal, Ereli said: "I'm not speaking nonsupportively of it. I'm just saying that I'm not aware that this proposal right now is going anywhere."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told reporters that the Arab summit would send a small group of Arab leaders to present the plan to the Quartet of international mediators—the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia.

The United States, which dominates the Quartet, favors the Israeli position that Israel and its neighbors should fix borders through negotiations.

Mulki said earlier that asking the summit to restate the peace initiative was having the effect Jordan wanted.

"It has stirred things up. The whole world now remembers that there is an Arab peace initiative," he told reporters.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana, a guest at the opening, said he saw a change in the Arab position.

"It (the initiative) is most constructive, (more) than ever before. I think there is movement. We cannot forget where the previous positions of the Arab League were," he said.

Jordan had tried to simplify the 2002 initiative, adopted at an Arab summit in Beirut, to make it more appealing to Israeli and international public opinion.

But the other Arab countries insisted on spelling out in detail the conditions Israel must meet—including withdrawal, a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Opposition to any substantial amendment stemmed from Arab suspicions that Israel would try to obtain normal relations with Arab countries without giving anything in return.

Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa told the opening session of the summit that this should not happen.

"Israel still imagines that rights will be forgotten... (and) that the Arabs will normalize relations with it without any equivalent worth mentioning. It cannot happen without something real in return," he said.

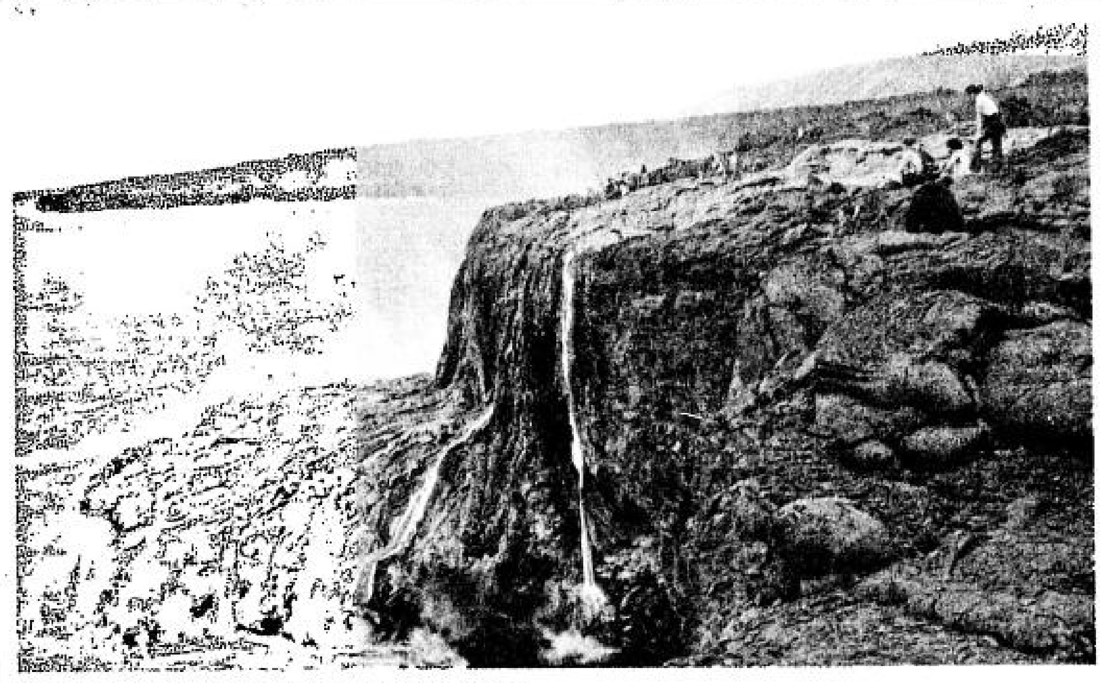
Mulki also gave a reassurance on collective Arab ties with Israel, although Jordan, along with Egypt, is one of the only Arab countries to have an embassy in the Jewish state.

"It's a clear message that there is no normalization before Israel takes all the measures required of it," he said.

But Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the chairman of the summit, said that faced with the attitude of Israel the Arabs must show the world their peaceful intentions.

"We must make the international community, the conscience of the world and the Jewish people itself bear witness to the strategic nature of the Arab option for peace," he said.

The attendance at the meeting, at 13 monarchs and presidents from the 22 Arab League members, is about average for Arab summits, which Gulf Arab rulers often skip. *Reuters*



SUNSET VIEW FROM THE VOLCANO

Visitors to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park near Volcano, Hawaii, gather near sunset March 21, as lava from Kilauea Volcano reaches the Pacific Ocean.

AP

EU split on Chinese arms ban

BRUSSELS—China's tougher stance on Taiwan threatened to derail European Union efforts to boost ties with Beijing on Tuesday and delay lifting the EU's arms embargo.

Splits emerged in the bloc as France defended the move, rejecting US fears it would lead to a flood of arms sales.

But diplomats said a Chinese law against independence moves in Taiwan had made others, including Britain, more wary and that a lifting of the ban would now probably be delayed.

"It is clear that China has not fulfilled certain conditions for lifting the embargo, notably by not raising tensions in the region," said one EU diplomat in Brussels.

"I would not expect a decision any time soon," said a senior Polish diplomat, adding that the United States was unhappy with EU measures planned to stem arm sales once the ban is lifted.

China said the embargo, imposed after Beijing's bloody crackdown in 1989 of protesters during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, was outdated and urged the EU to stick to its original target of end-June.

"It's unreasonable to link China pushing the EU to lift the arms embargo and China passing the anti-secession law," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao Liu told reporters in Beijing, insisting the legislation was not aimed at war.

Any delay would be warmly welcomed by the United States, which has pledged to defend Taiwan in the event of an attack.

However diplomats said no decision had been taken on the move and that France was fighting to keep the end-June target.

President Jacques Chirac insisted the lifting would not lead to more arms exports, which are subject to a variety of other national and EU-level restrictions.

"Lifting the embargo does not mean selling arms," he told the Japanese daily Asahi Shimbun.

"The Europeans have no intention of launching a policy of arms exports to China, which is not asking for this. What the Europeans want to do is normalize relations with China," he said in the interview, distributed in Paris by his office.

The arms ban was not formally on the agenda of an EU summit on Tuesday but diplomats said leaders could choose to raise it.

Chirac and others in Europe see boosting trade and diplomatic ties with China as a way of counter-balancing US power in the world. He won the backing of other EU leaders last December to prepare the lifting of the embargo by June 30. *Reuters*

Kyrgyz leader refuses to resign amid rising opposition protests

BISHKEK—Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev refused Tuesday to resign or annul the results of a disputed parliamentary election but ruled out the use of force to quell a week of mounting opposition protests.

Accusing opposition leaders of attempting to stage a coup, Akayev said that talks were the only way out of a crisis that has turned the spotlight on this little-known former Soviet nation in Central Asia.

"It's obvious that there is no basis and thus there cannot be any talk of an annulment of the parliamentary elections," he said in a televised address.

"We cannot put the legitimacy of newly elected deputies in doubt just because someone wants it so."

Akayev, a 60-year-old physicist by training who has ruled the impoverished mountainous nation since 1990, rejected opposition demands to resign.

"Only the people or parliament can make such a decision and we are not going to hold any negotiations on this point," he said. "They aren't any reasons for me to step down, because you can't use criminality to remove legally elected authorities."

His comments followed a week of intense protests after a March 13 runoff election that saw the opposition presence in the 75-member parliament reduced to a mere handful of seats.

While Akayev has been regarded as the most liberal of rulers in the region, he has faced increasing criticism in recent years and charges that his relatives wield undue influence in Kyrgyzstan's economy and politics.

Two of his children won parliamentary seats.

The country's electoral commission Tuesday declared elections held in 69 districts as valid, with complaints in five others still to be examined in court and another region to hold the poll within a month.

The opposition in Kyrgyzstan claims his administration rigged the poll in order to pack the chamber with his supporters ahead of a presidential election in October.

The cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad in the impoverished south near the border with Uzbekistan have borne the brunt of the demonstrations, which have seen protesters seize several government buildings, police stations and airports. *AFP*

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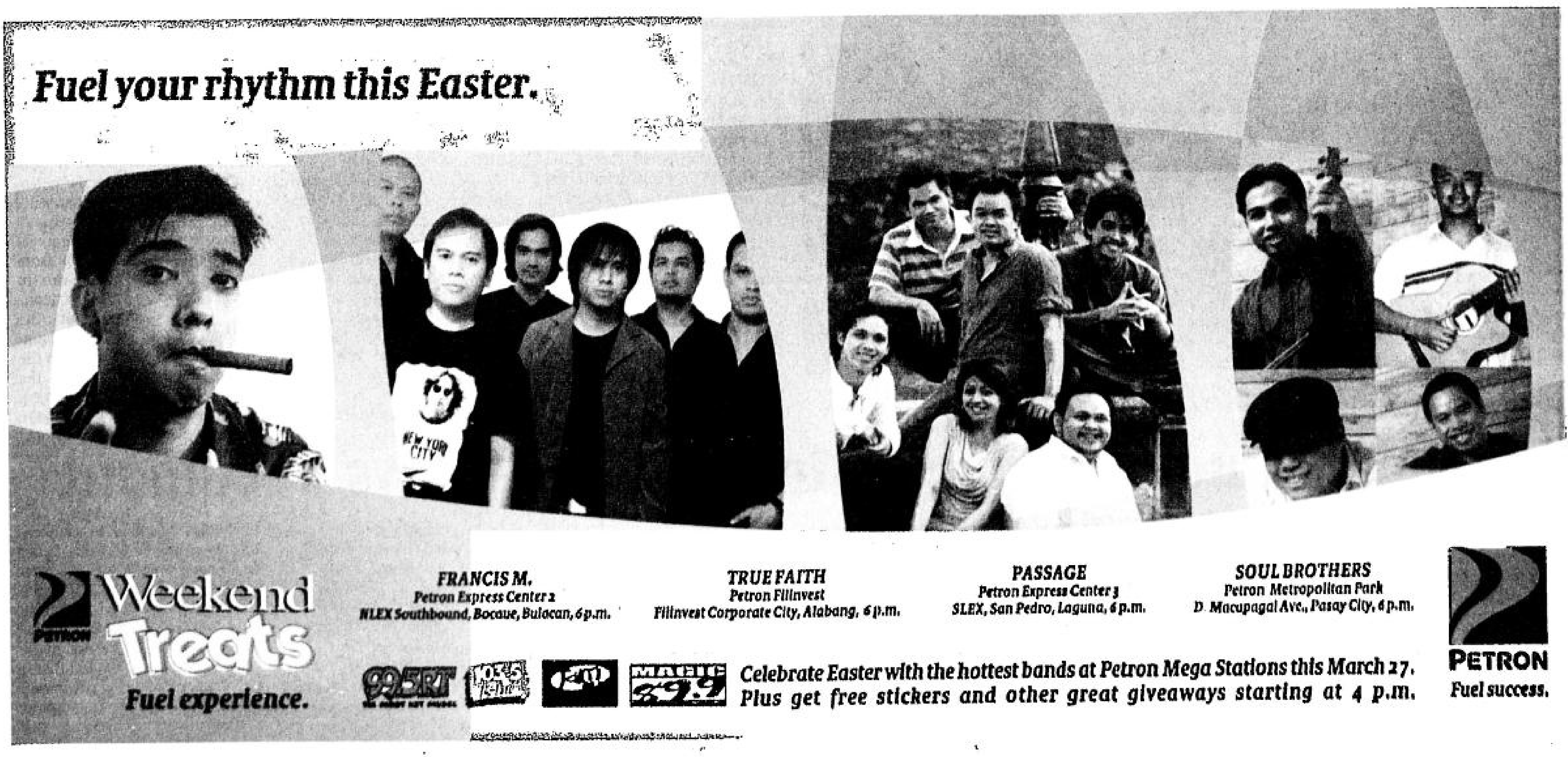

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Minnesota school shooting rampage probed

RED LAKE, Minnesota—Authorities were trying to determine what caused a teenager to gun down his grandfather, put on the man's police-issue belt and bulletproof vest, and drive his marked squad car to a high school, where he began shooting his classmates at will.

Jeff Weise, 16, killed nine people and wounded seven Monday before trading gunfire with a police officer and apparently shooting himself. His motive still wasn't clear Tuesday, but the FBI said the shootings appeared to have been planned in advance.

It was the nation's worst school shooting since the Columbine massacre in April 1999 that ended with the deaths of 12 students, a teacher and the two teen gunmen.

The killings on this northern Minnesota Indian reservation began at the home of Weise's grandfather, Daryl Lussier, 58, who was shot to death with a .22-caliber gun, according to Michael Tabman, the FBI's special agent in charge for Minneapolis. Also killed was Lussier's companion, Michelle Sigana.

Lussier had worked as a tribal police officer for decades. Weise then drove the older man's squad car to the school, where he gunned down security guard Derrick Brun at the door and spent about 10 minutes inside, targeting people at random.

Hearing the shots, students and adults barricaded themselves into offices and classrooms and crouched under desks, authorities said. A teacher and five students were shot to death, and two 15-year-olds remained in critical condition at a Fargo, North Dakota hospital with gunshot wounds to the face.

"Right now we are in utter disbelief and shock," said Floyd Jourdain Jr., chair of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa.

Authorities were investigating whether Weise, who dressed in black and wrote stories about zombies, may have posted messages on a neo-Nazi website expressing admiration for Adolf Hitler.

Using the handle "Todesengel" —German for "Angel of Death"— the writer identified himself as Jeff Weise of the Red Lake Reservation. In April 2004, he referenced being accused of "a threat on the school I attend," though it says he was later cleared.

Tabman said Tuesday he couldn't confirm whether Weise was the person who made the postings.

School board member Kathryn Beaulieu said Weise had been placed in the school's Homebound program for a policy violation. She did not elaborate.

Relatives told the St. Paul Pioneer Press that Weise was a loner who was often teased by others. They said his father committed suicide eight years ago and his mother was living in a Minneapolis nursing home because she suffered brain injuries in a car accident.

The Star Tribune of Minneapolis reported in its Wednesday editions that the boy's father, Daryl Lussier Jr., killed himself in July 1997 after a daylong standoff with police. The grandfather who was killed, Daryl Lussier, tried to negotiate a peaceful resolution, the newspaper said.

Residents at the home where Weise was believed to have lived with his grandmother declined to comment Tuesday. School was canceled for the day as investigators scoured the building for clues.

High school principal Chris Dunshee said Weise "would not be what I would call a habitual troublemaker," and that he wasn't aware of a lot of teasing.

"I didn't really, I guess, feel that he was teased to the point where something like this would happen," he said.

At the Capitol in St. Paul, several hundred people attended a prayer ceremony for victims of the shooting where religious leaders joined Indians in drumming and chanting.

"Once again our people have been hit... but our people are strong," said Ona Kingbird, a Red Lake tribal member. "We'll come out of it."

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty expressed his condolences for the families of the victims and said it appeared the school had "very rigorous security."

"It looks like you had a very disturbed individual who was able to overcome a lot of precautions to do a lot of damage," the governor said.

But a school secretary and a cousin of the slain security guard said that Brun and a female security guard who fled from Weise did not carry guns. Brun's cousin, Nancy Richards, said Brun also did not wear a bulletproof vest.

It was the second fatal school shooting in Minnesota in 18 months. Two students were killed at Rocori High School in Cold Spring in September 2003. Student John Jason McLaughlin, who was 15 at the time, awaits trial in the case. *AP*

Parents beg US appeals court to save daughter

PINELLAS PARK, Fla.—The parents of brain-damaged Florida woman Terri Schiavo urged a US appeals court on Tuesday to reverse a lower court decision and order her feeding tube reinserted before their daughter died.

In a blow to the parents, and to the US Congress and the White House that stepped in to try to prolong Schiavo's life, US District Judge James Whittemore earlier on Tuesday rejected a request to order a resumption of feeding.

Bob and Mary Schindler immediately appealed to the 11th US Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta, saying their daughter, whose feeding was halted last Friday under a state court order, was "fading quickly" and her death was imminent.

Doctors have said Schiavo, 41, would likely remain alive for one to two weeks without the feeding tube.

There was no indication when the Atlanta court might rule in the bitter dispute over Schiavo's fate, which has divided her husband, Michael, and her parents in a seven-year legal battle, and has become a cause for the Christian right, anti-abortion activists and now politicians.

A lawyer for Michael Schiavo, George Felos, told reporters he had been told by doctors that Schiavo could go 48 more hours without food before there would be complications with reattaching her feeding tube.

That meant the Atlanta court should not feel undue pressure to reach a quick decision, Felos told reporters, adding whichever side lost the ruling would likely appeal to the US Supreme Court.

Asked about the parents' view that Schiavo was "fading fast," Felos said: "I do not believe it is true. Terri is stable, peaceful and calm."

Florida courts have found Schiavo to be in a "persistent vegetative state" and have long sided with Michael Schiavo, who is her legal guardian, in finding she would not wish to live in that condition and should be allowed to die.

Her parents, who say Schiavo responds to them and could recover, have persisted in trying to keep her alive.

"For the love of God, I'm begging you please don't let my daughter die of thirst," Mary Schindler said, weeping outside the hospice in Pinellas Park where Schiavo is being cared for.

The case landed in federal courts days after Schiavo's feeding tube was removed, thanks to a special bill giving federal courts jurisdiction that was rushed through by the Republican-led Congress. President George W. Bush cut short a Texas vacation to sign the law early on Monday.

In his dawn ruling, Whittemore said that legally he could issue the order to resume feeding only if the Schindlers could show their overall case, which cited violations of rights such as due process, was likely to succeed in federal court. They had not, he said.

"This court concludes that Theresa Schiavo's life and liberty interests were adequately protected by the extensive process provided in the state courts," he said.

Schiavo's parents argued in their appeal to the Atlanta court they had not been able to develop their case properly before Whittemore made "what will be a final adjudication of the merit in light of Terri's imminent death."

Michael Schiavo filed a motion to reject the appeal, saying that even if the court did not, it should delay for eight hours any order to reinsert Schiavo's feeding tube to allow him time to go to the US Supreme Court.

Supporters of Schiavo's parents, who embraced the case as one representing the "culture of life," were angry and disappointed at Whittemore's ruling. *Reuters*

RED Lake High School on the Red Lake Indian Reservation in Red Lake, Minn., is seen in this aerial view March 22. AP

PROFILE OF A GUNMAN

Minnesota shooter created macabre drawings

BEMIDJI, Minnesota—He created comic books with ghastly drawings of people shooting each other and wrote stories about zombies. He dressed in black, wore eyeliner and apparently admired Hitler and called himself the "Angel of Death" in German.

His father committed suicide about four years ago, and his mother is in a nursing home after an auto accident, according to news reports.

On Monday, 16-year-old Jeff Weise went on a rampage, shooting to death his grandfather and the grandfather's companion, then invading his school on the Red Lake Indian Reservation. Armed with two pistols and a shotgun, he killed nine people and wounded seven before shooting himself to death in the nation's bloodiest school shooting since Columbine High in Colorado six years ago.

Investigators are not sure exactly what set Weise off, but fellow students at Red Lake High said they saw what looked, in retrospect, like warning signs.

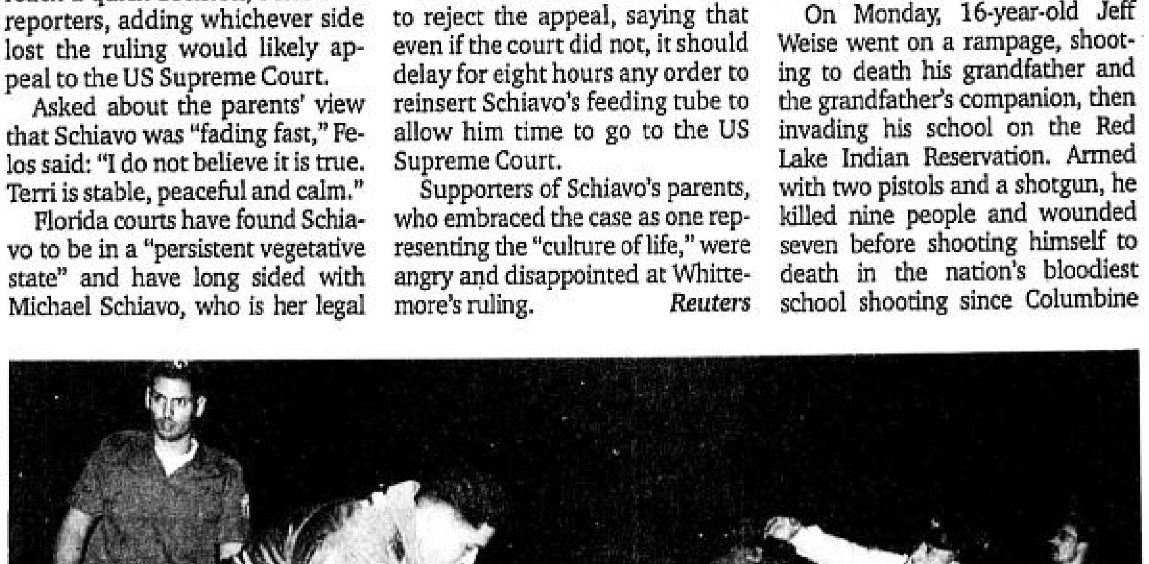
About a month ago, his sketch of a guitar-strumming skeleton accompanied by a caption that read "March to the death song 'til your boots fill with blood" was displayed in his English class, said classmate Parston Graves Jr.

Graves, 16, said he was thinking about that picture Tuesday. "I thought that was him letting everyone know" that he was going to do something, Graves said.

Graves said Weise had also shown him comic books he had drawn, filled with well-crafted images of people shooting each other. "It was mental stuff," he said. "It was sick."

DAWN Fineday, right, with daughter Natasha, both from Leech Lake, weep during a traditional prayer service outside the North Country Regional Hospital in Bemidji, Minnesota Tuesday. AP

Weise, who routinely wore a long black trench coat, eyeliner and combat boots, has been described by several classmates as a quiet teenager. Some of them knew about his troubled childhood—relatives told the St. Paul Pioneer Press his father had committed suicide and his mother suffered head injuries in an auto accident. *AP*



ISRAELI police officers arrest right-wing Jewish protesters blocking the main highway between Tel Aviv and the northern Israeli city of Haifa near the central city of Netanya March 22. AP

Sharon overcomes hurdle to Gaza pullout

JERUSALEM—Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon won a key vote on Wednesday over a state budget he must push through parliament by month's end or face a snap election that would threaten his plan to pull out of Gaza.

Parliament's finance committee voted 10-9 in favor of the 2005 budget, sending the package to the full legislature where Sharon faces a tough battle for final approval next week against ultranationalists opposed to ceding an inch of occupied land.

Under law, if the 264.5 billion shekel ($62 billion) budget is not passed by March 31, a general election must be held in late June, a month before the Gaza withdrawal is due to begin.

An early national ballot could put Sharon's "Disengagement Plan" on hold—or possibly lead to it being shelved altogether—while complicating any new peace moves with the Palestinians.

Committee approval of the budget followed a night of political infighting in Sharon's rightist Likud party, which is sharply divided over his intention to evacuate all 21 Jewish settlements in Gaza and four of 120 in the West Bank.

The vote marked the crossing of another major hurdle for Sharon. But with rebellious Likud lawmakers vowing to vote against the budget, he is not guaranteed a majority when it comes before parliament next Tuesday.

As he scrambles for legislative support, he is counting on broad public backing for his Gaza plan as well as Israelis' distaste at the idea of holding a third election in four years.

Likud rebels on the finance committee had threatened to block the budget and it appeared Sharon would have had no choice but to boot them off the panel and replace them.

But such a move could have torn Likud apart.

Reflecting the heightened tensions, Sharon told his party's lawmakers at a stormy session on Monday night: "I don't see how we could run together in the next elections, while I support the disengagement (from Gaza) and you do not."

Under a compromise, Likud rebels agreed to back the budget in the committee in return for support from pro-Sharon Likud legislators in another parliamentary panel for a proposal to hold a national referendum on the Gaza plan.

Sharon opposes a referendum, calling it a delaying tactic.

Political commentators, while noting the compromise was approved over Sharon's objections, said the referendum proposal stood almost no chance of winning full parliamentary approval.

Sharon's coalition holds 67 of 120 seats in the Knesset but his margin has been jeopardized by the threat of about a dozen Likud deputies to reject the budget in protest at the Gaza plan. *Reuters*

Bin Laden eluded US forces in Tora Bora, says document

WASHINGTON—A terror suspect held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was a commander for Osama bin Laden during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and helped the al-Qaida leader escape his mountain hide-out at Tora Bora in 2001, according to a US government document.

The document, provided to The Associated Press in response to a Freedom of Information request, says the unidentified detainee "assisted in the escape of Osama bin Laden from Tora Bora." It is the first definitive statement from the Pentagon that Bin Laden was at Tora Bora and evaded US pursuers.

The detainee is not identified by name or nationality. He is described as being "associated with" al-Qaida and having called for a jihad, or holy war, against the United States.

In an indication that he might be a higher-level operative, the document says he "had bodyguards" and collaborated with regional al-Qaida leadership. "The detainee was one of Osama bin Laden's commanders during the Soviet jihad," it says, referring to the holy war against Soviet occupiers of Afghanistan.

The events at Tora Bora were a point of contention during last year's presidential race, and President George W. Bush as well as Vice President Dick Cheney asserted that commanders did not know whether Bin Laden was there when US and allied Afghan forces attacked the area in December 2001.

Cheney said on Oct. 26 that Gen. Tommy Franks, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan, had "stated repeatedly it was not at all certain that Bin Laden was in Tora Bora. He might have been there or in Pakistan or even Kashmir," the Indian-controlled Himalayan region.

Franks, now retired, wrote in an opinion column in The New York Times on Oct. 19, "We don't know to this day whether Mr. Bin Laden was at Tora Bora in December 2001." He added that intelligence assessments of his location varied, but Bin Laden was "never within our grasp."

On several occasions in the days following publication of that column, Bush cited it on the campaign trail as evidence that Bin Laden could have been in any of several countries in December 2001. "That's what Tommy Franks, who knew what he's talking about, said," Bush said on Oct. 27.

Sen. John Kerry, the Democratic presidential nominee, lambasted Bush during the campaign for having missed a chance to capture or kill Bin Laden. *AP*

Today's view: What conflict of interest?

From page A1

puzzled why they are accusing him of conflict of interest," Fernandez told the INQUIRER.

Fernandez said she had worked with Locsin at Today, and the Daily Globe, which preceded Today, and she vouched that Locsin had always allowed the editorial group a free hand in the treatment of stories.

The INQUIRER got in touch with Locsin on Tuesday. Yesterday, he sent a text message saying that he was at the "Tokyo University for his son's graduation."

In a letter to Enrique Razon of the Kamahalan Publishing Corp., which publishes the Manila Standard, the newspaper editors, reporters and staff also took issue with Locsin's being an opposition congressman.

Independent publisher

"How will directions from the publisher, an opposition congressman, jibe with our policy of supporting the administration?" the Manila Standard employees asked.

"So, what are they afraid of? That Locsin will censor all their pro-administration stories? countered some Today staffers.

"In fact, Rep. Locsin is aligned with the 'sunshine coalition' led by Speaker Jose de Venecia that controls the House majority. Locsin could not have been assigned to chair a House committee if he were an opposition congressman..."

They added that there's nothing wrong even if Locsin is identified with the opposition.

"What's wrong with having a publisher independent of the Palace? Doesn't the Journalists Code of Ethics that they cite also speak of asserting one's independence from the powers-that-be?" Today's staffers said.

Complaint filed

On Monday, the MSEA filed a complaint before the Philippine Press Institute questioning the propriety of Locsin's position as publisher of the Manila Standard Today even while he was an incumbent congressman representing the First District of Makati City.

MSEA president Tony Macapagal said Locsin's twin positions were in violation of at least three provisions of the Philippine Journalists' Code of Ethics, a set of guidelines enforced and instituted by the PPI.

Violations of code of ethics

Macapagal said that being a publisher and a congressman, Locsin violated provision No. 5 that said a journalist "shall not let personal motives or interests influence me in the performance of my duties; nor shall I accept or offer any payment, gift or other consideration of a nature which may cast doubt on my professional integrity."

He said Locsin also violated provision No. 11 which states that journalists should conduct themselves "in such a manner as to maintain the dignity of my profession. When in doubt, decency should be my watchword."

According to Macapagal, Locsin's dual position also violated provision No. 10, which states that journalists "shall accept only such tasks as are compatible with the integrity and dignity of my profession, invoking the 'conscience clause' when duties imposed on me conflict with the voice of my conscience."

'Grand design'

Aside from the violations of the Code of Ethics, the MSEA also complained that Locsin had a "grand design" to turn the newspaper "into Today, the newspaper that failed."

"We have survived the past three years without a publisher. We do not know Congressman Locsin's agenda," they also said in the letter to Razon dated March 21.

Early retirement option

The MSEA also assailed the "early retirement option" offered by management which would displace some MSEA members. They also said that the newsdesk was already "overmanned" with the appointment of Fernandez as co-managing editor, and two others from Today.

"Our work means a lot to us and, as we have proven in the past many years, we are willing to make sacrifices for it," the Manila Standard employees said. But the changes that Locsin had imposed since he became publisher on March 6 "do not seem to be leading the company to a better place," they said.

"In our view, our jobs are being threatened because our counterparts at Today have to save their own," the letter also said.

No new employees

MSEA vice president Jing Villamente said they would block any new appointment because it could be in violation of the union regulations that provide a mandatory six-month probation for new employees.

But Manila Standard Today editor in chief Julie Yap Daza said there are "no new employees" yet appointed to any position in the newspaper.

"I have not signed any appointment papers," Yap-Daza said.

Jesus' faces subsidize missionaries

From page A1

The missionaries bolted from their former group called the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to form the Missionaries of Jesus. They practically had to seek shelter anywhere available.

Contreras said proceeds from the sale of "rostros" as well as support of other benefactors helped the group acquire a lot in Antipolo City which is now the site of their headquarters, the Bahay Misyon.

The sculptures that adorn Bahay Misyon are actually the first ones Contreras did and gave to the founders of MJ.

He said he is now doing a sculptured version of the Virgin of Antipolo aboard a galleon.

The "rostros" are now displayed at the Bahay Misyon, the headquarters of MJ, in Antipolo City. Usually fashioned out of *traviesa*, or discarded wood from the railroad tracks, the chiseled faces depict Christ the King, a Good Shepherd, and even a smiling Christ. But majority are of the suffering Christ—crowned with thorns, pierced, as an Igorot and as an Indian, poor, sad and contemplative.

Contreras said he donated his works to the missionary group because he believes in what it is doing.

A FAMILIAR sight during Holy Week in San Pablo, Laguna, is the Nazarene procession depicting the passion of the Christ with maroon-garbed women keeping vigil.

NOLI YAMSUAN

Not in terms of money

Contreras said that his donation could not be quantified in terms of money.

"*Walang talo. Kung baga yung binabayaran kasi sa* artist *pagod, pero yung pagod pag alam mong nakatulong ka, nawawala rin* [I don't feel I lost. Usually, artists are paid for their labor. But if you know that what you're doing can do much help, you don't feel you've worked at all," he said.

It is this generosity and support that have kept the MJ going.

In addition to Contreras, the MJ is supported by bishops and private groups that include the University of Santo Thomas Choir, the St. Scholastica Group, La Salle alumni, Paco Catholic School alumni and individuals who formed themselves into the Friends of MJ, particularly the Cainta, Rizal Group.

Sense of achievement

He said donating his works to MJ also gave him a sense of having achieved something good.

"*Nakakatuwa kasi may nagagawa ka rin bilang* artist *na may* moral aspect. *Nagiging* instrument *ka* for a noble purpose [It makes me happy to have works with a moral aspect. I become an instrument for a noble purpose]," he said.

Artists generally have a reputation for being "selfish" and living a decadent life, he added. With the "rostros," he showed this was not true.

He said he is not a religious person, but doesn't know what led him to do religious works. He offered a touching and inspiring thought, though.

"*Kasi pag nakikita ng mga tao yung mga* religious images, *nagdadasal sila, nag-iisip sila ng mabuti. Kapag nasa simbahan ang isang tao, hindi naman siya nag-iisip ng masama, 'di ba* [If people see religious images, they usually pray and think of good things. If a person is inside a church, he usually thinks about good things, right]?" he said.

Concern for the poor

Contreras said he is also supporting the mission of MJ, which is to bring the gospel, or the good news, in the local communities.

Fr. Wilfredo Dulay, coordinator general of the MJ, said Contreras has been very supportive of their group. "We share the same affinity and concern for the poor and the voiceless," he said.

Contreras, for his part, said he also helped the missionaries because he has known some of them for some time now.

Dulay recalled that Contreras was with them during the anti-martial law demonstrations.

Self-taught

A self-taught artist, Contreras said he makes sure his art retains a distinctly Filipino character.

"*Kung manghihiram na lang tayo. manghiram na tayo sa sariling atin* [If we are going to borrow ideas, let's just borrow from our own culture]," he said, adding that an artist should have immense respect for his materials.

His father, an artistic man himself, taught him to make art based on the materials at hand, and not to force the material to conform to what he wants to achieve.

A highlight of Contreras' career was his use of the *travieza*, and how he made art out of it, he said.

He has won various awards, including the Grand Prize in the 1992 Art Association of the Philippines Open Art Competition, and in the 1997 Bonifacio Public Art Competition.

Contreras said he is pro-people, even in his art.

"I'm pro-worker. I'm pro-urban poor. I'm sympathetic to the ordinary people," he said.

Cardinal's passion: Visiting poor in village of Sin

From page A1

Fr. Mark Munda, the village caretaker.

"His visits don't really last long, just between 15 and 30 minutes. But he spends most of his time with the children," Munda said.

Not even his illness can keep the cardinal from these regular visits.

Once last December, after a weeklong stay in hospital, Sin stopped home only for a change of clothes and went straight to the Punta community, recalled Munda.

The visit came as a surprise to the villagers who knew that Sin had been down with low-grade fever that necessitated his being confined for a week at the Cardinal Santos Hospital.

Earlier in October 2004, he had spent 17 days in hospital after suffering from a heart attack while undergoing dialysis.

But apparently nothing can keep the energetic Sin down.

Munda recalls the prelate suddenly showing up at the village on the afternoon of New Year's Day.

"I thought he was sleeping at the villa because I know he was receiving a lot of guests. He's always very excited to come. He would always ask, 'Anything new? How many have been given houses already?"

No one could be more excited about having the multimillion-peso project completed soon.

'Father and son' duo

Sin and his protegé, now Bataan Bishop Soc Villegas, had envisioned the community to be the continuation of the prelate's ministry after his retirement, said Munda.

The dynamic "father-and-son" duo raised the initial P6 million—through donations, supplemented by the sums that Sin received on retirement—for construction of the first building which is now occupied by 84 families.

Among the supporters of the project was the Couples for Christ group whose Gawad Kalinga program helped build the houses.

Sin and Villegas chose the plot themselves, which used to be the site of an oil company compound and which is separated by the Pasig River from the Pandacan oil depot.

'Richest' resident

Munda says the plan was to build a decent community for the poorest of the poor in Punta. Probably the "richest" resident in the community is a taxicab driver who earns an estimated P2,000 a month.

The village design is something to marvel at. Located in the very middle, just a few steps from the entrance, is the Parish of the Mother of Perpetual Help. Its elevated structure and basement are curiously similar to the Edsa Shrine where Villegas used to be the rector.

On both sides of the church are two residential buildings available for free for a total of 168 families.

Behind the church is a 14-classroom learning center whose teachers will be provided by the nearby Montessori School.

At the far end of the community is the site of a planned low-cost housing project, also for Punta residents. Lots are for sale at a very low cost.

WHERE are the clotheslines? The eyesore commonly seen in low-cost housing projects is hidden from view in designated laundry areas to keep the condo-style building sleek and neat, Fr. Mark Munda, the village caretaker explains. MITCH MAURICIO

2nd building

Munda says workers are rushing to complete the second building by May, the church and the school in time for Sin's 77th birthday on Aug. 31.

The low-cost housing project remains in the planning stage as there's no funding yet, Munda says.

In the meantime, Sin and his staff are busy screening residents who will be awarded spaces in the village. Everything is for free so recipients really have to be poor.

Much of the basic work on the buildings is done by the beneficiaries themselves, supervised by engineers, architects and a small group of construction people.

Each family is required to put in at least 24 hours a week, working on the house they would soon be occupying, says Munda. They can help carry cement bags, do some painting or carpentry work.

No clothesline on display

The 21-sq.-m. building units are a cheap but slick version of high-end condominiums. They're built in such a way that clotheslines, a common eyesore in squatter communities, are hidden in "laundry areas" in the middle of the buildings.

A unit is big enough to accommodate a living room at the front end, a small bedroom in the middle and a kitchen and toilet at the far end.

Munda says large families sacrifice headroom by building a second mezzanine where the children can sleep.

Sin's vision doesn't stop at simply building houses, said Munda.

Help to the fullest

"If we really want to help the poor, we have to help them to the fullest," he quoted the prelate as saying.

The village of Sin now has a livelihood program, helping generate income for the families there.

There's a bakery run and staffed by villagers. Another group makes bags. Others segregate the garbage of the community from which they are able to earn some income.

On Sundays, residents attend Mass at the still only half-built parish, a gesture of gratitude to a Church that indeed never abandons the poor.

And thanks also to an indefatigable prelate, they now live in comfort in the Village of Sin.

PANOS

GLOBAL AIDS PROGRAMME

Stop TB Partnership

Panos / Stop TB Media Fellowships

The Panos Global AIDS Programme and Stop TB Partnership invite print and photo journalists from India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Zambia, Ethiopia, Malawi and Haiti to apply for a three-month fellowship to write/photograph issues around TB, and TB & HIV/AIDS. Fellowships will run from June to October 2005.

Each fellowship will involve working closely with the Panos Global AIDS Programme, the Stop TB Partnership and a panel of experts on TB and communication in TB and/or HIV/AIDS in the countries specified. Coverage will not just detail problems and challenges but will also highlight success stories and models.

All selected fellows will be provided with editorial support in terms of storyline and production of photos as well as on medical and policy issues.

Selected print journalists will be awarded a grant of 400 US dollars each, plus travel and data collection expenses, and will be expected to produce three 1000-word articles on issues around TB and TB & HIV/AIDS. Selected photojournalists will be awarded a grant of 1000 US dollars each, plus travel and data collection expenses, to produce one photo essay around the issue of TB and/or TB & HIV/AIDS.

Applicants must submit the following no later than 2nd May 2005.

- Curriculum vitae
- Up to five samples of published work on health/development issues
- A 500-word write up explaining why you should be considered for the fellowship
- Two references from persons who have known you professionally

Selected journalists must undertake to publish or print their photographs in their respective publications.

Journalists writing in regional languages are encouraged to apply. However their CV and the write up should be in English and at least one sample of their work must be translated into English. To apply, please e-mail all relevant documentation to Panos.TBFellowship@panosaids.org

Panos works with the media and other information actors to enable developing countries to shape and communicate their own development agendas through informed public debate.

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News on Bohol mass poisoning ruins Quezon 'budin' trade

TAYABAS, Quezon—If there is one place in the country other than Mabini, Bohol, that suffered from the mass poisoning of schoolchildren, it is the short span of road popularly known in this town, 150 km southeast of Manila, as "Calle Budin."

"The local *budin* (cassava cake) industry is now down. There's almost no buyer after that news on Bohol poisoning, which was wrongly attributed to cassava, broke out in the media," lamented Isabelita Abordo, one of the pioneers in the local *budin* trade in Barangay San Diego in the town center.

Budin (cassava cake), a classic Filipino dessert enjoyed year-round, is made from cassava locally called "balinghoy" or "kamoteng kahoy."

The grated cassava is mixed with cheese, evaporated milk, egg and sugar. The mixture is placed in a shallow round or square pan and baked in an oven until done.

Abordo, who owns "Chabing's Special Budin" store, said they were forced to accept the return of the boxed cassava cakes from their regular sellers after news on "killer cassava" made headlines.

No buyers

"Although, it was not part of our agreement, we were forced to accept the returned product. We pity our sellers, there were really no buyers."

Cassava cake stall owners maintain their own group of regular traders who sell *budin* to as far as Manila.

ISABELITA Abordo shows freshly baked *budin* still in pans but without buyers.
DELFIN T. MALLARI JR./PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

"I've been in this business for almost three decades but this is the first time news from a far away province had negatively affected our *budin*," she said. "What we were used to regularly receive as feedbacks on our products from here and abroad were all praises."

Abordo urged the national government to correct the impression that cassava is the culprit behind the mass poisoning in Bohol.

"The government should now categorically declare that the cause of the poisoning was pesticide or any other toxic chemical and not the cassava. There are lots of cassava-based industries that have been negatively affected by that careless conclusion," she said.

Another product

"Nilupak," mashed cassava with sugar and milk, and another favorite on Calle Budin, was also a casualty in the negative write-ups, Abordo said.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit has already declared in a written statement that pesticide poisoning was behind the deaths of 27 pupils in the San Jose Elementary School in Mabini on March 8.

The children fell ill after eating caramelized cassava that they had bought from vendors outside the school during recess.

DOH officials revealed "significant findings of pesticide poisoning" among 49 victims tested by the authorities, but no traces of cyanide that is naturally produced by cassava, a popular root crop in the Philippines.

Florencio Binay Jr. owner of Adora's Special Budin's store, noted that the 15 stalls in the neighborhood regularly produce an average of 1,000 pans of cassava cake daily.

"We're now down to less than a hundred a day. For myself, I'm not cooking *budin* for the past four days lest I incur more financial difficulties. At present, making *budin* is a losing business venture here," he complained. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Senator says gov't owes vets ₱24B

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—A senator has called on the Philippine and United States governments to work for the compensation of Filipino war veterans, especially those who fought during World War II.

"Let us not forget those who died. But let us also not forget our veterans who are still alive," Sen. Richard Gordon said in a speech during rites commemorating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the islands of Panay, Guimaras and Romblon from Japanese occupation.

Gordon said Filipino veterans in the US "have gotten their fair share" in terms of benefits and compensation but he said veterans in the Philippines "have gotten nothing so far."

He said non-payment could have been caused by too many claimants who have applied for compensation and benefits.

"But an effort must be made by both the Philippines and the US to find out the legitimate ones and they should not hide behind the fact that too many people are applying. They must find those who really died and served this country during that fateful war," said Gordon.

P24B in debt

Gordon said the Philippine government owes all veterans, including those who fought in World War II, around P24 billion in compensation as mandated by law.

"It is not right to say we have no money. We must find that money to pay for the veterans," the senator said.

In an interview with reporters, the senator said the Philippines would have difficulty pushing for compensation from the US if it cannot pay the veterans.

Gordon's call was cheered by around 800 veterans and their families who attended the commemoration at the Iloilo Freedom Grandstand.

"We have long been hoping that our P5,000 monthly pension would be increased," said Rafael Sobremisana, 86, from Barangay Baybay Sur, Miag-ao town in Iloilo. He fought on the island of Guimaras and in Jaro District here during the war.

Still alive

There are around 2,000 veterans still alive in Panay, Romblon and Guimaras, said Rodolfo Lataquin, president of the 6th Military District World War II Veterans Association, Inc.

He said at least 18,000 joined the resistance movement against the Japanese occupation on these islands.

The ceremony was attended by defense attachés of the US, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.

China to invest $300M in Subic for glass factory

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—China's leading glass manufacturing company is pushing through with its plan to pour in $300 million worth of investments here, officials of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority said on Monday.

SBMA Administrator Alfredo Antonio said Wang Changlin, president of Hebei Jingniu, a large-scale glass company in China, has considered plans to put up his firm's glass factory at the Subic Gateway District here.

"After conducting ocular inspections in several areas recommended by the SBMA investment and processing department, we have finally chosen a very suitable plant site," Wang said during a recent meeting with Antonio and SBMA Chair Francisco Licuanan III.

Licuanan said the SBMA has also continued inviting other Chinese investors to come and continue investing in Subic.

"We are very, very interested in inviting you to Subic. You are assured that the SBMA will give you the support you need to fast-track the processing of your company's requirements," Licuanan told the visiting Chinese investors.

Officials of the company have committed to infuse the amount, the biggest made by a Chinese firm in the country so far following President Macapagal-Arroyo's visit to China last year.

They said they were determined to invest in Subic because of its strategic location for transshipment and effective security system.

The plant will need at least 100 hectares of industrial flat land to accommodate the production plant for products such as rolling crystallite glass and coated online float glass, which are being supplied to more than 50 countries in Europe, Asia, the United States and Africa.

"We are producing high technology crystallite glasses that are seven to eight times more wear-resistant than alloy steel and 10 to 25 times corrosion-resistant than stainless steel. That is why they are very suitable to use as industry and building materials," Wang said.

The company's other products include float sheet glass and solar control reflective glasses.

Wang was accompanied here by top executives of the Jingniu and George Judan, Philippine trade representative to Shanghai.

During the construction period, the project will hire more than 3,000 workers. Upon completion, the company will employ 2,000 operation workers and 1,000 administrative employees, SBMA officials said. *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Dumaguete food tour promotion questioned

By Alex Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—"Food? Why would tourists come to Dumaguete because of food?"

For a city whose only claim to culinary fame is the "budbud kabog," Mayor Agustin Perdices is taking Tourism Secretary Ace Durano's offer to put Dumaguete under the food tourism category with a grain of salt.

(*Budbud kabog is a local delicacy made of steamed sticky rice with chocolate stripes wrapped in banana leaves.*)

Durano made the announcement during his visit to Dumaguete last week with President Macapagal-Arroyo, two weeks after he was assailed by political and business leaders for failing to include Negros Oriental in the Department of Tourism's "Biyahe na!" promotions.

The DOT's television plugs under the food theme is being produced and will start airing in June.

Awkward

Perdices, however, said he finds it awkward to include Dumaguete and Negros Oriental in the food category. "I don't see how we can convince people outside to come here because of food. It's out of place!"

He said it would be more appropriate to include Dumaguete and Negros Oriental in the "People and Culture" theme, the third batch of promotions being prepared by the DOT.

Perdices said he hopes he could meet with Patria Aurora Roa, tourism director for Central Visayas, to discuss the matter.

Gov. George Arnaiz, meanwhile, disclosed that the province would continue to sell itself through natural attractions.

He said the province's thrust is to promote tourism that is environmentally friendly, wholesome and good for family visits.

Head of Acetylene Gang falls on drug possession charge

BACOLOD CITY—More than two weeks following his release after posting bail, a suspected leader of a robbery group was again arrested in Canlaon City, Negros Occidental, for possession of illegal drugs.

Peter Camed, alleged head of the Acetylene Gang, is detained at the Canlaon City, Negros Oriental police station jail pending filing of criminal charges against him.

Camed's arrest came more than two weeks after he was released on a P24,000 bail last March 2 in connection with the robbery case in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental.

Camed and his group, the Acetylene Gang, were suspected to be responsible for the robbery of at least 10 banks and pawnshops in Cebu, Bohol, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental and Ozamiz City, taking off with about P15 million in cash and jewelry.

The group was called Acetylene Gang because the members used acetylene to open the vaults of pawnshops and banks.

Last Saturday, the Canlaon City police conducted a raid on the house of Flordeliza Jaculbe, Camed's live-in partner, in Barangay Mabigo, Canlaon, on the strength of a search warrant issued by the court.

Senior Insp. Petronilo Gracia, Canlaon police chief who led the raid, said they found 8.46 grams of suspected shabu in the house.

Gracia said they set up a trap for Camed before they applied for a search warrant for violation of antidrug laws before they raided the house of Jaculbe where Camed temporarily lived. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Woman driver lets out her woes

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Ester Miranda is, by far, the first and only woman in Pampanga who ekes out a living by driving a jeepney in and out of the cities of San Fernando and Angeles.

Miranda also wants to talk to a fellow woman, President Macapagal-Arroyo, to tell her of the "kalbaryo ng mga tsuper (the burden of drivers)."

"We're not earning anymore," Miranda, 44, says, ruing the non-stop increases in the prices of gasoline, parts and tires.

While she encounters lesser *kotong* (mulcting) cops and traffic enforcers, she says some are still around to bleed them dry of hard-earned money.

"If you don't drive until late into the night, you won't be able to bring home money," the widow says of how she is able to earn between P300 and P500 daily to send her two daughters and a son to college.

Pension

The P9,000 monthly pension of her late husband, Jessie Obispo, comes handy when the money is short. Her husband, an Army sergeant, died in an encounter in 1991.

Miranda says she was forced to become a driver because life really is difficult.

As a driver for a Chinese family in Hong Kong starting in 1995, she sorely missed her children and wanted to be always by their side to guide them as they grew up.

She held on until 1999 when there were enough savings to buy her own jeepney.

She has adorned her yellow jeepney with a rosary, a picture of the Virgin Mary and a waving cat figurine for good luck.

Early bird

She's on the road as early as 4:30 a.m. daily, starting the day by picking up passengers without queuing at the terminal and later joining her group's *pila* (scheduled trips).

If the trip is good, she is homebound by 8 p.m. Often, she stretches the 16-hour work by an hour or two, managing to take slots for three to five trips in between.

To her mind, those who pay boundary, the day's rent for the jeep, earn less and take home only between P150 and P200.

Only on the third or fourth trip do they get to raise this amount.

"The first trip is (for raising the money for) gasoline. The second is for the jeep's owner," Miranda says.

She says being a woman driver makes her vulnerable to discrimination.

"Because I'm a woman, there are passengers who fear riding in my jeep," she says.

She says the safety of her passengers is always in her mind, noting that she has not figured in any accident. She also keeps a first aid kit in her jeep.

CLEANING GOV CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Cavite Gov. Ayong Maliksi goes to work leading the cleanup of the water near the Caylabne Bay Resort, a campaign he vowed to conduct on a regular basis and to help rid Cavite's waters of debris and garbage.

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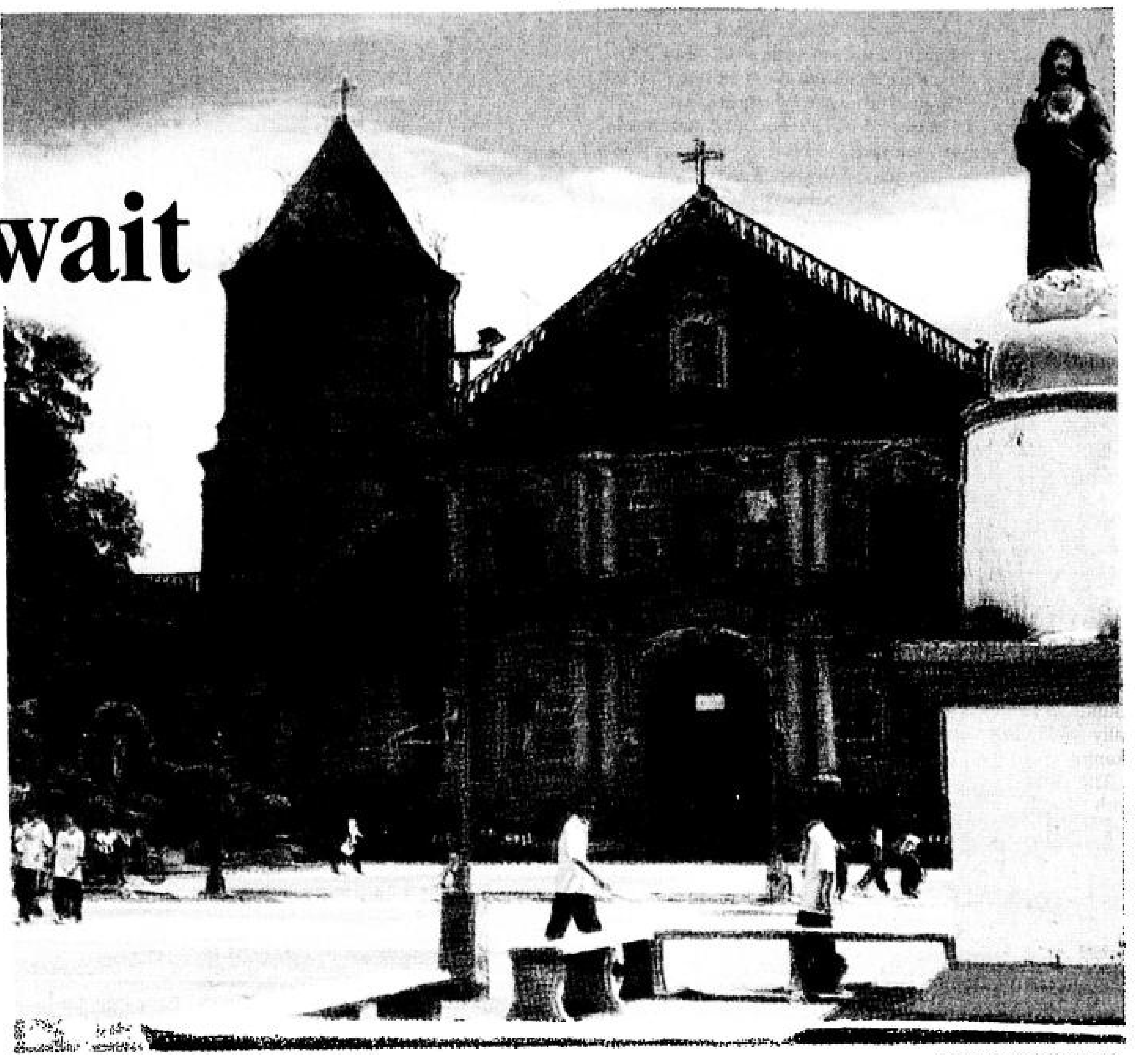
INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Laguna's old churches await pilgrims



THE ST. ANTHONY of the Padua Shrine in Pila town: Among the miracles attributed to the patron saint are cure for cancer, pregnancy and finding lost belongings.

THE SAN SEPULCRO Parish Church in Landayan in San Pedro town draws the biggest number of visitors.

By Romy Ponte
Sta. Cruz, Laguna

PILGRIMS, even those coming from other countries, may consider visiting 12 churches in Laguna, most of which are centuries-old, miraculous and popular as centers of devotion by Catholics and Christians during this Lenten season:

San Pedro

One of the most popular, the Church of the Santo Sepulcro, located in the interior village of Landayan in San Pedro town, draws the biggest number of visitors. Fridays are special days, the days of devotion to the Santo Intierro or the "Mahal na Señor," patron saint of the Parish of the Holy Sepulcher, which was founded in September 1969.

Thousands of devotees line up the street, waiting for their turn to touch the image at the center of the altar. On Good Fridays, the single line extend up to 6 km long, reaching up to the Pacita Complex or the Biñan exit of the South Luzon Expressway.

The church can be reached via the expressway or Susanna Heights.

Pakil

The Church of San Pedro de Alcantara in Pakil town is famous for its religious festivity called the Turumba Festival, which starts March 18 and lasts three months.

Devotees bring with them their intentions and petitions before the miraculous Virgin of Turumba known as the Our Lady of Sorrow.

Many of those coming from Quezon province attend the Masses in honor of the Blessed Virgin or the solemn, emotion-filled procession to a nearby spring that is believed to heal the infirm.

Stories of miraculous healing and graces received are common in this most attended and longest of all festivals.

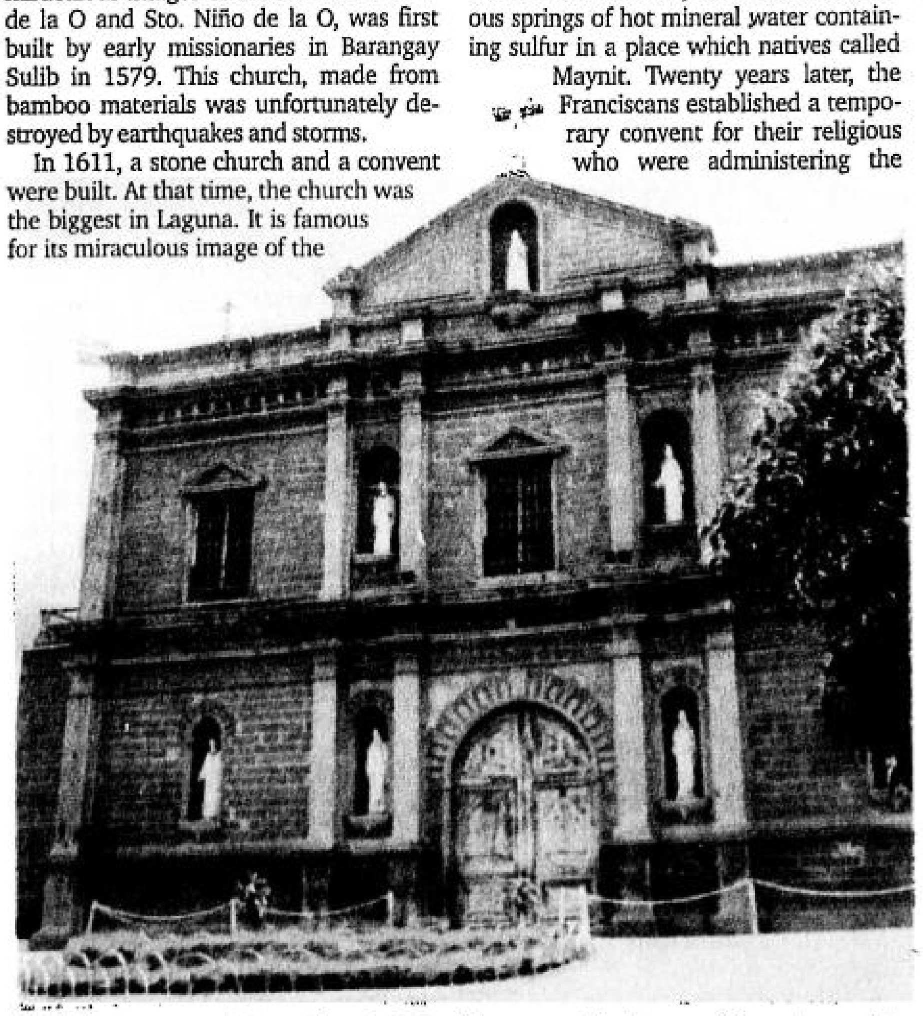
The church can be reached through the expressway, passing through Calamba City, Los Baños, Sta. Cruz and Pagsanjan, or the Antipolo (Rizal) route through Mabitac, Siniloan and Pangil.

It took the people of Pakil 35 years to finish the stone church, according to church accounts. The church was completed in 1767 and earned the reputation of being the sturdiest around the Laguna lake.

Pangil

The 427-year-old Nuestra Señora de la Natividad (Our Lady's Nativity) parish in Pangil town, which is also home to the miraculous images of the Nuestra Señora de la O and Sto. Niño de la O, was first built by early missionaries in Barangay Sulib in 1579. This church, made from bamboo materials was unfortunately destroyed by earthquakes and storms.

In 1611, a stone church and a convent were built. At that time, the church was the biggest in Laguna. It is famous for its miraculous image of the pregnant Madonna called the Our lady of the O, which was donated by Spain's Prince Carlos who later became King Carlos.



THE SANTA Rosa de Lima Church in Sta. Rosa town: The image of the patron saint, St. Rose of Lima, is enthroned at the center of the ceiling-high "retablo."

Some devotees testified that it was through the intercession of the pregnant Madonna that a dengue epidemic that struck hardest in Pangil was stopped in 1998.

A six-month old flood in 1974 was also said to have subsided after the residents prayed to the Nuestra Señora de la O for nine days and performed a penitential procession of the pregnant Madonna around the submerged town.

Sta. Rosa

The Church of Santa Rosa de Lima, located in the City of Sta. Rosa, was founded on Jan. 18, 1792, coinciding with the gaining of Sta. Rosa's political independence.

Construction began only in 1796, four years after the founding of the parish, and took 16 years to finish. It was administered by the Dominicans, the first missionaries to organize and serve the parish. Old chronicles say labor was provided by residents, as well as recruits from China who decided to live in Santa Rosa.

The image of the patron saint, St. Rose of Lima, is enthroned at the center of the ceiling-high *retablo* of the Church of Santa Rosa de Lima.

On Aug. 23, 1999, another image coming all the way from Santa Rosa's origin in Lima was offered as a gift from the Peruvian capital and then Peruvian Ambassador to the Philippines Victor Aritomi-Shinto. It is enthroned on a new *retablo* in the north center side of the church.

Calamba

The Church of San Juan Bautista in Calamba City was founded in 1632, but nobody can really say when it was built. What is known is that part of the existing adobe wall dates back to the original structure that was burned by Japanese forces on Feb. 12, 1945.

On that day, town residents were herded into the church by the fleeing Japanese and burned. The incident has been called the Calamba Massacre.

The fire did not level the church. The parish priest, Eliseo Dimaculangan, fled and returned at the end of World War II to rebuild the church.

It was in this church where national hero, Dr. Jose P. Rizal, was baptized on June 22, 1861.

Los Baños

The Church of the Immaculate Conception in Los Baños town, which is 392 years old, belongs to one of the oldest Spanish communities in the Philippines.

In 1590, Franciscan priest Fray Pedro Bautista (now a canonized martyr-saint of the Catholic Church) discovered numerous springs of hot mineral water containing sulfur in a place which natives called Maynit. Twenty years later, the Franciscans established a temporary convent for their religious who were administering the springs and popularized the waters for curative purposes.

It was only in 1613 when the parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was established. After two years, the town center was formed and renamed Los Baños.

Pila

The Church of San Antonio de Padua of Pila was recently consecrated by former Bishop Francisco C. San Diego as a Shrine of San Antonio de Padua in honor of the patron saint's miraculous interventions, among other reasons.

Even before the coming of the Spaniards, Pila was already noted for its spiritual ambience. The town center was known as Pagalangan (place of reverence).

Dr. Luciano P. R. Santiago, in his account about the Pila church, said that when the *conquistadores* discovered Pila in 1571, they were so impressed by the nobility of its people that they conferred on it the special title, La Noble Villa de Pila.

Among the miracles attributed to the patron saint are cure for cancer, pregnancy and finding lost belongings.

Pagsanjan

The Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Pagsanjan, one of the most beautiful in Laguna, is 318 years old. It was initially a crude structure of nipa and bamboo built in 1688 by the menfolk.

Fray Agustin, the first parish priest of Pagsanjan when it became a regular parish on Nov. 12, 1687, donated the image of its patron saint, Our Lady of Guadalupe. The image was given to him as a gift by rich and pious Mexican families. It was installed on the main altar of the church, which was completed in time for the town's first celebration of the Feast of the Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12, 1688.

Some accounts say Fray Agustin had suggested that a bigger church be built. The new church was completed in 1690.

Franciscan priest Felix de Huerta mentions in his account that a Chinese, Miguel Guan-Co, and the chief *alguacil alferez*, Alonzo Garcia, directed the rebuilding of the church. The stone structure underwent more improvements, but it was heavily damaged during World War II.

Attempts to restore the church were made, but serious efforts took place only in 1965, under Archbishop Alejandro Olalia.

On April 6, 1969, Bishop Pedro N. Bantigue blessed the rebuilt church and consecrated the main altar.

Mabitac

The parish town of Mabitac has a 96-step stone stairway that leads to the Church of Nuestra Señora de Candelaria. From this height, one can enjoy a panoramic view of the Laguna de Bay.

The church started with an image of the Nuestra Señora de Candelaria. Between 1599 and 1600, one such image was commissioned by the *alferez*, Senor Cristobal de Mercado, for the church in Dilao outside Intramuros (now Paco, Manila), according to Fr. Felix de Huerta.

Three years later, the image was transferred to a newly founded hospital in Los Baños where it stayed for several years.

In 1615, Huerta revealed that Fray Juan Miguel de Talavera from the parish of Siniloan requested the Father Provincial to "concede" the image in the hospital of Los Baños to Siniloan. Fray Talavera wanted it to be placed on a little mount between Inaguasan and Galoy, two barrios of Siniloan, "for the purpose of uniting the several rancherias scattered about and around the place, so as to facilitate their spiritual administration."

The place where the Ermita was constructed was eventually separated from the mother town of Siniloan by popular demand. This gave rise to the founding of Mabitac as a town in 1618, named after the many holes and cracks in the land during the dry season.

Majayjay

The seed of Catholicism in Laguna was planted in the town of Majayjay where the first cross was raised in a place near the river called May-it. This cross was housed in a small shed of nipa and bamboo, which the natives themselves built, said De Huerta.

This first church was burned in 1576. Two years later, the San Gregorio Magno Church was built, again of bamboo and nipa and dedicated to the patron saint, St. Gregory the Great.

In 1599, the central government authorized the construction of a stone church in Majayjay. In 1619, an edifice made of stone was begun and this was completed in 1649.

In 1660, it was again razed and underwent several rehabilitation efforts. The task was herculean, considering that the church was over 60.5 meters wide and 16.5-m high for a parish population of only 4,000.

Amid protests, the church was finally finished in 1730 by 4,000 people on forced labor. Rehabilitation cost P26,000.

A century later, the church was again destroyed by a typhoon. It was reconstructed through the help of the parishioners.

Because of its age, the church was placed under the government's rehabilitation program in 1954 with the help of the National Conservation Society of the Philippines.

Nagcarlan

Catholicism was brought by the Franciscan missionaries from Majayjay to Nagcarlan in 1573.

In 1583, the first church in the town was built out of wood and nipa, through the support of Fray Tomas de Miranda, who was credited for being the first to plant wheat in the Philippines. The Church of San Bartolome Apostol was built in honor of the martyr saint, Bartholomew the Apostle.

In 1752, a stone church was built but was damaged by fire in 1781. Repair work was started by Fray Atanacio de Argobrejo and completed by Fray Fernando de la Pueblo, who added a beautiful four-story tower.

In 1845, more renovations were made. A choir platform and underground cemetery were also built.

San Pablo

The Augustinian Missionaries founded the church of San Pablo in 1680. When the Augustinians left in 1784, the Franciscan friars took over and ran the parish until 1898. The parish was later placed under the care of the diocesan priests.

The church was originally under the Archdiocese of Lipa. When the Diocese of San Pablo was founded on April 18, 1967, it was made the Cathedral of the Bishopric.

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OPINION

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EDITORIALS

Broken bread

EASTER may have the climax, but Maundy Thursday has the oldest practices peculiar to Holy Week. Of course, many Catholics associate Holy Thursday with the Mass since the day commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist. And since the Mass is basically a celebration, it is not surprising that many of the practices revolving around Maundy Thursday are joyous, a foil to the pathos of Good Friday and the grief of Black Saturday.

Since the day has a practical character—the preparation for the Lord's sacrifice on the cross—Holy Thursday has evolved into a day of different accessory ceremonies. In ancient Rome, for example, while the preparation for candidates for baptism was being finalized, the Church also celebrated *missa chrismalis*, the ritual for the preparation of the holy oils that would be used for the baptisms and other important liturgical rituals. Along with the baptism of neophytes, penitents took part in reconciliation ceremonies.

That Maundy Thursday is associated with rituals of preparation is evident in the washing of the feet. Biblically, the washing was a prelude to the Last Supper, and was a form of libation or cleansing. Theologically, too, it became a ritual of self-debasement or humility, since Christ made the gesture of washing the feet of his apostles in order to deliver his message more powerfully for the apostles to be servants of the people. Service, to Christ, means nothing short of self-sacrifice. He himself set the powerful example when he died on the cross.

The Last Supper, of course, prefigured that sacrifice. As the central event that instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, it took its chief symbolism from the breaking of the bread, which was both a metaphor for fellowship and for sacrifice. That Christ instructed his apostles to do the supper in his memory indicates that sharing and sacrifice are two sides of the same coin.

All of these injunctions and encouragement should indicate that Maundy Thursday is the day in which Christians prepare themselves in order to be able to fulfill Christ's mandate (Maundy comes from the Latin *mandatum*, which means mandate). The Christian imperative is to love one another and share in the fellowship of service and sacrifice.

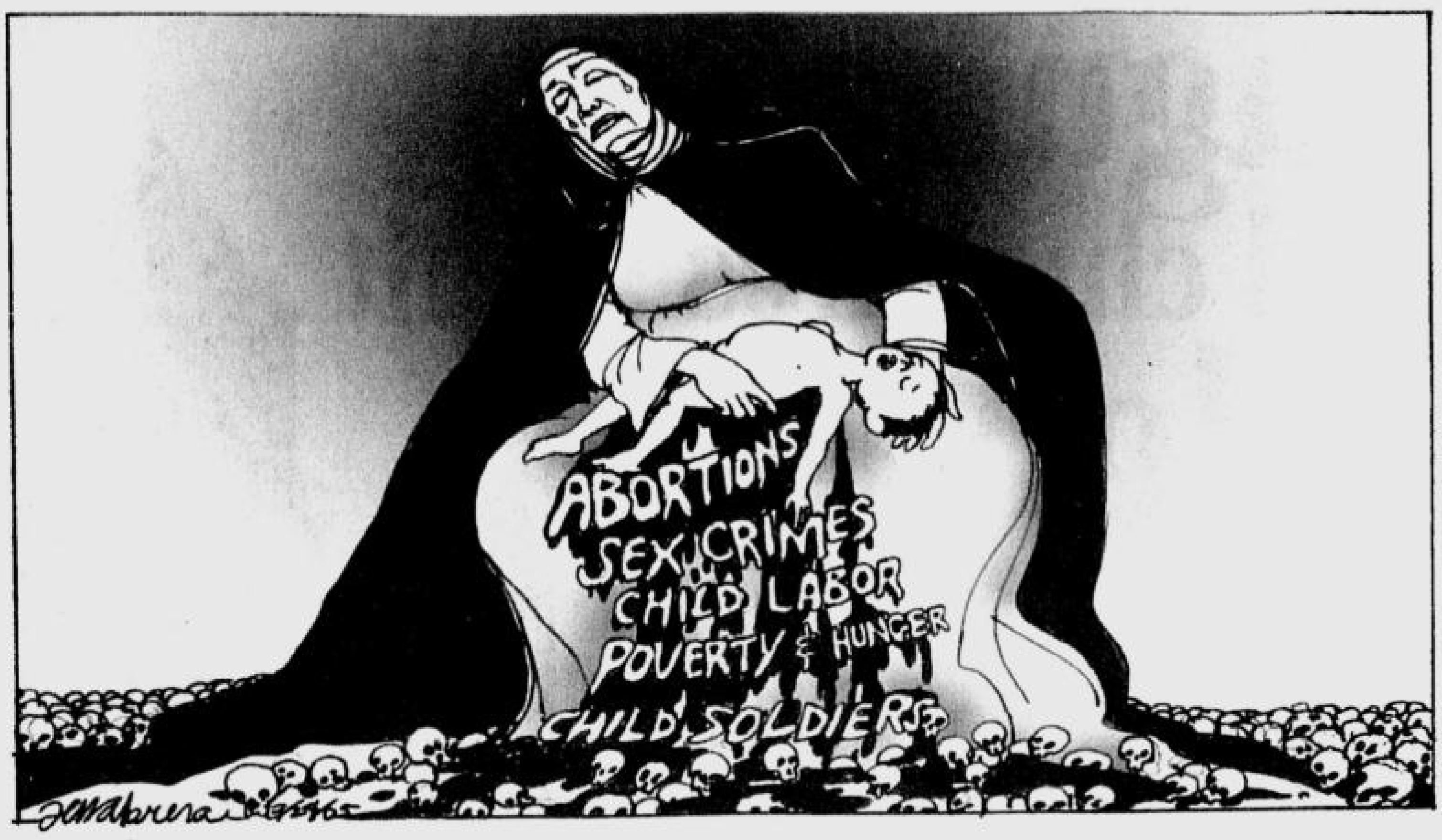
Broken people

IN THE PHILIPPINES, the joyous preparatory character of Maundy Thursday is quite evident in the *visita iglesia*, in which penitents become pilgrims going the rounds of churches to perform in quite a literal fashion the passion of the Christ, as summed up in the 14 Stations of the Cross. The latter devotion has been updated by the addition of a 15th station, the Resurrection, obviously as a corrective to what some critical churchmen and modern Catholics perceive to be the martyrdom complex of the Filipinos, their penchant for bathos and self-disparagement.

The addition is quite unfortunate because the liturgy is performative, and it would be pointless to perform the resurrection while going through the motions of sacrifice and death, which are the foci of the Stations of the Cross. And in the colorful calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, there is an appointed time for everything. Insinuating the resurrection on a day traditionally reserved for the performance of rituals to prefigure the sacrifice is poor programming. It makes Easter redundant.

Moreover, the attitude that looks at the Filipino Catholics' rituals of sacrifice and martyrdom as nothing but defeatist and fatalist is arrogantly secular and liberal, sensibilities that are basically anti-religion. These sensibilities have given rise to the sun-sunny and saccharine attitude of evangelicals and charismatics. Culturally, this is manifested in the media's and other sectors' determination to trumpet "world-class" Filipinos and their international victories. Tired of defeats and sorry stories, this nation wagers on Pacquiao to give it a nice feeling. Now that Pacquio has lost . . .

But there's no denying Filipinos are a broken people. But so are the others. Brokenness comes not only from the struggles and pains of existence, but also from the divisions and backbiting that obtain during the struggles. A people's solidarity amid sufferings should indicate that they would come off the challenge whole and more consummate. They go through the rituals of brokenness to be reconstituted as a people. And that's the promise—and mandate—of Easter.



A spoonful of sugar

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"JUST a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down," Julie Andrews sang in "Mary Poppins," the 1964 Oscar-award winning movie, which was later turned into a Broadway musical.

A 2005 version of that tune haunts the country's sugar industry leaders: how to balance the Food Fortification Law's directive to lace staples with crucial nutrients, even as malnutrition ravages their workers' families within the "sugar belt."

Long before RA 8976 came on the books, scientific data mounted on how widespread "hidden hunger" devastated the most vulnerable groups: children and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers.

The Sixth National Nutrition Survey, released last July, confirmed what previous studies revealed: 4 out of every 10 pre-schoolchildren lack Vitamin A, making them vulnerable to blindness and stripping away immunity to diseases. Stunted with crippled IQs, many go to premature graves.

Two out of every 10 pregnant and lactating women lack this vital micro-nutrient. Scrawny anemic women mother and nurse wizened infants who, in turn, will give birth to the next generation of dwarfed babies.

Here, "the rate of 172 maternal death rates per 100,000 is unacceptably high," says the United Nations study, titled "A Common View, A Common Journey." The comparative toll in Thailand is 36. It is 30 in Malaysia.

Experience shows that boosting micro-nutrients in staples—from salt, flour, oil to soy sauce and sugar—is the most cost-effective way of bringing these threats to heel.

The United States was "the first country that successfully used salt iodization in the 1920s." About 80 percent of instant noodles in Thailand today are fortified with iron, iodine and Vitamin A. China buttresses its soy sauce. Extensive tests confirmed that the rice variety IR681440 is Vitamin A-rich. It also packs four to five times more iron than other strains. But its commercial use may be three years away.

Fortifying salt here licked iodine deficiency. Yet, up to the late 1980s, 9 out of every 10 women in Mountain Province were inflicted with goiter. Use of iodized salt bolted from 31 percent to over 56 percent in less than five years.

Urine tests of pubic school kids document that "the Philippines has solved its iodine deficiency problem, although pockets of deficiency still exist."

Goiter is rarely seen now. How many kids were saved from becoming cretins or deaf mutes? No one can tell. The head count is only for the victims.

Reluctantly at first but with growing cooperation, flour millers and coconut cooking oil manufacturers are implementing the law. "Social responsibility is also good business," says a flour miller.

Members of the Coconut Oil Refiners Association are following the path blazed by San Pablo Oil which fortified Minola since 1998. Three flour manufacturers market fortified flour commercially.

In Metro Manila and Cebu, the National Food Authority sells iron-fortified rice on a pilot basis. From the pork barrel, Deputy Speaker Raul del Mar set aside P1.49 million for an experimental project to distribute fortified *pan de sal* for students in 10 North Cebu elementary schools.

Will sugar see the example blazed by other industries as a "window of opportunity" for growth through service? Or will it forfeit the high ground by seeking exemptions?

The "sugar belt" sprawls loosely across Regions 6, 7 and 12 and some other pockets. Sugar workers and families make up a substantial portion of the population.

Ironically, it is here where nutritional shortfalls are most severe. In Negros Occidental for example, almost half the kids, from six months to five years of age, lack Vitamin A. Four out of 10 are anemic and underweight. Anemia is most prevalent in Iloilo (77 percent). Aklan follows closely.

Sugar is grown in Nothern Cebu, mostly in Rep. Clavel Martinez's bailiwick. She wants to slice off the district into a miniscule province as her term ends. But over half (56 percent) of pregnant women lack iodine and almost 52 percent of children face Vitamin A shortfalls. They're also underweight.

That skewed pattern prevails in sugar areas in Tarlac, Negros Occidental, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato. It reinforces the stigma of exploited *sacadas* who work in sugar fields.

Impersonal statistics rarely capture the grisly poverty that savages lives of sugar workers. "They squeeze from most of us nothing beyond statistical assent," the late FAO regional representative Dioscoro Umali once said.

There are enough loopholes in the law to beat its purpose by foot-dragging. Who is accountable, the producer or repacker? What about the lack of Vitamin A sugar premix? Given the quedan system, will sugar destined for beverages be exempted? And so on. "More questions can be asked than a wise man can answer," Jose Rizal once said.

Persistent micro-nutrient shortfalls can shove death rate sharply up, the Nutrition Center's Dr. Florentino Solon warns. But it may be the "human face" on that toll that will be a crucial factor.

Perhaps, no one traced these features better than the late Claretian Nial O'Brien, who lived among *sacadas*. In his book "Island of Tears, Island of Hope," Father O'Brien, who chose to be buried in Negros, writes about what is at stake.

Here's just one searing incident: The *sacada* Nanding lays out the corpses of her two daughters, Margarita and Benilda, on top of a rough wooden box. "When I came nearer, I realized they were not really wearing dresses. It was crepe paper..."

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Thank God for the trains

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE'S something you can do this Holy Week, and that is to explore Metro Manila by public transport. I've made a number of discoveries that way lately. I don't take the car by daytime anymore if I can help it, certainly not to Makati, coming as I do from Quezon City. I take the train. In case you still don't know it, we now have three lines running across the city.

There's the LRT line from Caloocan to the end of Taft, which dates back to martial law, pretty much the only thing Imelda can be proud of. I recall it was widely criticized as another Imeldific project then, not least by the establishments in Avenida Rizal that it eventually ran to the ground. The shadow that fell on them from the overhead tracks wasn't metaphorical, it was literal. The once lush avenue, one of the favorite places of my youth—that was where the bookstores and movie houses and shops were; there was as well the ice cream parlor on top of the once proud tower, GEE, a favorite dating place of lovers—swiftly turned forlorn and seedy.

Up until recently, when the spot at least in front of National Bookstore reclaimed part of its respectability, the whole avenue had become home to low life. I recall a TV show that featured the place many years ago, and I was astonished at its plunge into perdition. The LRT line runs partly through that. It has turned out to be a humongous blessing. Without it, Taft Avenue would be dead by now. I worked near the place in the mid-1970s and can tell you horror stories about the traffic there. On at least a couple of occasions, I walked the length of Ermita to Quiapo at night: It was faster.

The MRT line opened shortly before the last year of Erap's abbreviated term, pushing ahead of schedule to proclaim the dawning of the new millennium. I remember that it was bitterly opposed too by the real estate owners in Ayala and elsewhere, who feared they'd suffer the same fate as their counterparts in Avenida. I especially recall one of their defenders in media, a columnist in one newspaper, arguing completely solemnly that the train line running the length of Edsa would spoil its aesthetics. The aesthetics of Edsa? That is like saying the aesthetics of Payatas—and Payatas has more claim to it!

Neither Ayala nor environs died. The MRT resuscitated Edsa the way the LRT did Taft. Without the MRT, Edsa would be dead now, and it is barely breathing as it is, five years after the MRT opened, with a flood of new cars tumbling over it. It's what I take every time I go to Makati.

It had the virtue of having a strong air-conditioner before, something you appreciated during blistering summers, though it threatened to give you pneumonia when you fell in the path of its blowers while drenched in sweat. But that was before it was overrun by the huge crowd that now patronizes it. During rush hours, it resembles the buses of yore where you understood how sardines felt. Pity the women.

They saved the best for last, or at least the most recent. It's the LRT II which runs the length from Marikina to Claro M. Recto, just before Avenida. The idea, I gather, is for the first LRT and the MRT to form a circle—which would be completed when (or if?) the Pagasa end is extended to Caloocan—and for the second LRT to run across the circle, so that you can theoretically reach most parts of Metro Manila by shifting trains.

I did that last week. I wanted to go to Gilmore to buy some computer stuff, and took the MRT to Cubao from Pagasa and thence the LRT II to Gilmore. Pagasa to Cubao is just three stations away, and Cubao to Gilmore two. Some things I discovered in the course of it:

One is that it is a fairly long walk from the MRT station in Cubao to the LRT II, at least by local standards. Going to and from train stations in other places, such as the major capitals of the world, takes long walks as well in some parts. With the not very slight difference that the climate in those places is so much cooler, making walking so much pleasanter. I conducted my experiment while the sun bore down on the city in early afternoon, which wasn't helped by the fact that I had to get out of Farmer's Market into the streets to get to Araneta Center and thence to Gateway. The LRT station is at the end of Gateway. There is no connecting path through the malls.

I was amazed while at that to glimpse the monumental changes in Cubao. It now looks more like Makati than the old Cubao. But that is another story, or column.

Two is that the LRT II station in Cubao is completely First World! It's by far the best train station in the country, bar none. It's large, spacious, orderly, cool (literally and idiomatically), and clean. There are only two drawbacks to it. The first is that it has no benches, which was an absolute surprise. One would imagine it would be commonsensical to put something there for people to deposit their asses on. The passengers would have come from long walks, some of them lugging all sorts of stuff, and would like to rest their weary bones while waiting for the train. Which is the second thing: The trains come at intervals of six minutes, which isn't exactly a short wait. Surely it wouldn't hurt for them to show some kindness to us?

Three is the part that commends it to Holy Week excursions. While waiting for the train at the station in Gilmore on the way back, I walked to the far end of it, overlooking the computer shops on one side and St. Paul's on the other, and was greeted by a strong and balmy breeze. It swirled through that part of the station, and gave me a soporific sensation not unlike what I'd feel on the beach. Some thrills in life are still truly free, or dirt cheap.

Now if only we can make that breeze less smog-filled. But that is still another story, or column.

Lenten insights

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

IN THE SPIRIT of the season, let's get away from more mundane matters and concentrate on the spirit, courtesy of Fr. Carlos H. Abesamis, S.J., professor of biblical studies at the Loyola School of Theology and resource person for the Socio-Pastoral Institute. The author of a number of works, among them "A Third Look at Jesus," Fr. Abesamis published last December what he calls the "Backpack of a Jesus-Seeker," planned as a series, with the second installment due soon.

"Backpack" is a book of imaginary conversations among three characters: Carl (perhaps the author), "Seeker" and "Backpack" (a talking depository of spiritual insights). In it, the "Bible Pages" also come alive and talk. All of them interact in dissecting matters of faith in a contemporary style, thus appealing to lay people perhaps much more than straight sermons. "Backpack" may be akin to animation in print. Abesamis sent me Chapter 6 of "Backpack" No. 1, titled "Mel Gibson & Filipino Catholicism: Soul-Mates? (Mel Gibson's Incomplete Jesus)." I reprint it here with some editing:

I. A Spiritual Experience

Carl, Seeker, Backpack: The next item in our backpack is Mel Gibson and his film, "The Passion of the Christ."

Backpack: Backpackers and bishops have flocked to see it. How did it affect you?

Carl: It hit me—in a personal and existential way. Jesus did suffer and die for me! He died to atone for my sins. This suffering and death that reeled before my eyes hit me in the guts and beyond.

Backpack: So, it was a spiritual experience.

Carl: It was, and I'm grateful for the reminder. Paul's existential testimony, "He loved me and gave himself up for me," can become deadwood dogma. Thanks to Gibson for stoking the fires.

Seeker: I had a similar experience, but…

Carl: I too have a "but."

II. Two Questions

Backpack: So, was it not a totally positive experience?

Carl & Seeker: Unfortunately not. The film brings up questions related to Filipino Catholicism.

Seeker: For instance, what effect does the blood-violence-suffering have on our concept of God? How does it impact on our spirituality, particularly our Lenten devotion of flagellations and crucifixions?

Carl: I'd also pose the question of our understanding of the death of Jesus: Should we limit it to "Why did he die?" Should we not also ask, "Why was he killed?"

Backpack: You have raised significant questions. I see many backpacks loaded with pirated versions of Gibson's film.

Seeker: And I see many religious personages who think it's the best and last word on Jesus' passion.

Gory?

Backpack: Was it violent and gory? Excessively so?

Carl: To answer your question, we have to look into (1) data outside the Bible, or extra-biblical data; (2) Gibson's imagination; and (3) the biblical data themselves. Extra-biblical data could be the private visions of saints.

Seeker: More importantly, extra-biblical data are furnished by historians who provide information regarding punishments in the time of Jesus, similar to what He experienced: what kind of whips, how many strokes, how the feet and hands were affixed to the cross, etc.

Backpack: And how was it in the case of Jesus particularly? Were the punishments He suffered exactly as described in those extra-biblical sources?

Carl: How it was in the particular case of Jesus is left to serious reconstruction, speculation or one's imagination.

Backpack: Was Gibson's treatment serious reconstruction, speculation or imagination?

* * *

Carl: We will come to that. Let us first look at the biblical data.

Seeker: Quite right. The Bible should be a principal source to dip into.

Bible Page 1: The scourging is narrated in just three words, and in a subordinate clause by Mark and Matthew.

"So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and **having scourged Jesus** he delivered him to be crucified." (Mk 15:15; Mt 27:26; Jn 19:1)

Bible Page 2: Again, the "way of the cross" is told quite simply.

Backpack: That's right. Mark and Matthew say without elaboration: and "**they led him out to crucify him.**" Simon of Cyrene is made to carry the cross. Luke, without describing the actuations of the multitude, simply adds that a great—perhaps friendly—throng followed Jesus and that women likewise followed and lamented Jesus.

"And **they led him out to crucify him.** And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." (Mk 15:20-21; Mt. 27:31; Lk 23:26)

"And there **followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him.**" (Lk 23:27)

Bible Page 3: The scene at the crucifixion is told with much detail, but the actual act of crucifixion is told in only three pregnant words: "And **they crucified him.**" (Mk 15:24)

Carl: Thank you, Bible Pages. So, Gibson's minutely detailed portrayal contrasts with the generally sober narration of the Gospel writers.

Backpack: Are you suggesting that those who paid for a movie ticket or a pirated CD are victims of Gibson's excessive imagination?

Carl: Let's hear out the Bible Pages.

Bible Pages: What we have done is to draw attention to a fact which normal Bible readers do not have time to notice, namely, how economical the biblical narration is (compared to Gibson's creative reconstruction, which is the "privilege," nay, the "responsibility" of the creative artist)…

Bible Page 3: In fact, it may be asked, how much of Gibson's presentation is real and how much is extravagant imagination.

Backpack: Do we see here any implication for Filipino Catholicism? (*To be continued on Monday.*)

The desert mothers

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

MARCH being Women's Month and today being Holy Thursday, it is a good time to reflect on the contribution of little known Christian women of ancient times.

During my recent visit to the Benedictine Resource Center at St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality in Tagaytay, Sr. Bellarmine Bernas, OSB showed me around the new building and library. If you've had a Benedictine education as I had (and so Germanic at that), you'd know you're home amidst this treasure trove that is both ancient and new.

I saw a stack of books, titled "The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women" (2001) by Laura Swan, prioress of a Benedictine monastery in the Pacific Northwest. Sr. Bellarmine bought many copies at sale price so that more women and men would know about these trail-blazing women. I went home with a copy.

Swan's book was the fruit of graduate research in theology and spirituality. "(When) I began to pursue and collect traces of these women's stories, it often felt like the sleuthing work of Sister Frevisse or Brother Cadfael in the medieval whodunits I enjoy. I found myself tracking down clues, following strands of evidence, and reading the shadow of texts to find these women. Clues often took the form of rare scholarly material, frequently in footnotes and asides."

Women's history, Swan complains, has often been relegated to the shadow world: felt but not seen. "Many of our church fathers became prominent because of women. Many of these fathers were educated and supported by strong women, and some are even credited with founding movements that were actually begun by the women in their lives."

Ancient Christian hagiography can be difficult reading, Swan says, so "to assist our 21st-century hearts and sensibilities," she retells many of the stories, cuts out the heavy and highlights the helpful and interesting.

Christianity, Swan says, was initially a home-centered faith, with domestic dwellings used for community meetings. Both women and men were involved in spreading the faith and in works of mercy. Ancient tombstones revealed that women held leadership positions: ruler of the synagogue, deacon, presbyter, honorable woman bishop.

Even at that time when Christianity was being persecuted by the Roman Empire, women were deeply attracted to the Christian movement. They embraced persecution and martyrdom and embarked on spiritual journeys. Some did experimentation in community living, others lived in solitude or in small groups.

As Christianity moved into the mainstream when it became the official religion of the Roman Empire, many were also drawn to the desert and monasteries. As leadership opportunities within mainstream Christianity decreased, the desert and the monastery offered women a greater sense of physical and spiritual autonomy.

Those who wanted to dedicate themselves to the ascetic life had to seek a spiritual leader. Writes Swan: "An *amma* or *abba* was someone seasoned in the ascetic life, who was known to have reached a level of maturity and wisdom and had experience in teaching by example, exhortation, story and instruction."

The goal of the desert, says Swan, was *apatheia*. "*Apatheia* is a mature mindfulness, a grounded sensitivity, and a keen attention to one's inner world as well as to the world in which one has journeyed…The *ammas* teach us to intentionally let go of all that keeps us from the singleminded pursuit of God: feelings and thoughts that bind us, cravings and addictions that diminish our sense of worth and attachments to self-imposed perfectionism. *Apatheia* is nourished by simplicity grounded in abundance of the soul."

Amma Syncletica of Egypt could have meant this for those with star complex: "For just as those who wish to gaze at the sun damage their vision, so also (she) who (tries) to mirror the radiance of her life fall victim to confusion of mind, dazzled, overcome, and unstrung by the magnitude of her achievements."

Melania the Elder of Jerusalem influenced a circle of men whose writings would highly influence Christian theology. Of her it was written: "A woman of more elevated rank, she loftily cast herself down to a humble way of life, so that as a strong member of the weak sex she might censure indolent men, so that as a rich person appropriating poverty, and as a noble person adopting humility, she might confound people of both sexes."

Radegunde (born 525) was the reluctant wife of Clothar I and queen of the Franks. She used her wealth to build hospitals and minister to the poor. She left her husband upon learning that he had ordered the murder of her brother. She established a monastery at Poitiers, preached daily and devoted much time to prayer. She had a talent for pastoral care and spiritual direction.

The list is long: Euphrasia the Elder and the Younger, Euphrosyn of Alexandria, Alexandra, Florence, sisters Fracla, Posenna and Prompta, Blessed Woman Gelasia, Hilaria, Juliana, Manna of Fontenet, Mary the Anchorite, Mastridia of Jerusalem, Monegund, Matrona of Perge, sisters Nymphodora, Menodora and Metrodora, Photina, Sosiana, Amma Tachom, Theodora and so many more.

In 1990, while on a difficult mountain coverage, I chanced upon a spiritual community composed of indigenous folk. They spoke in chants. They lived on top of a mountain and were led by a colorfully ornamented, betel nut-chewing B'laan woman with fair skin and light brown eyes. Her name was Mokayo. She was revered. Outsiders referred to her as *diwata* (muse or nymph). She was an *amma*.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Dog day afternoons

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

INBREEDING, it turns out, is pretty common particularly in the case of certain breeds of dogs that are in fashion or simply generally popular. Dalmatians, for example, tend to turn out defective and are susceptible to blindness. Pugs, unless they come from good stock, have weak lungs and poorly formed nasal passages. And, of course, almost everyone has heard of the terrible results of the popularity of pit bulls: the mass production of pups resulted in dogs with vicious and uncontrollable temperaments.

Dogs, apparently, lack appreciation of the incest taboo which, Plato said, existed in horses, (but which few believe today to be true). As Henry Fedden wrote: "Aristotle's horse having refused to mount his dam was induced to do so by the expedient of veiling her. On discovering his mistake, he jumped intentionally from a hill and was killed by a fall, thus showing an antique moral discrimination unknown to his descendants." What we would call dog incest occurs on a regular basis in homes where the owners have no intention of breeding mother with son, or father with daughter, but where canine libido takes over, leaving the family bitch "in the family way"—to the consternation of her masters.

My dogs at home (plus one more, who is with my mother) are the products of the incestuous union of a friend's bitch with her (the bitch's, not my friend's) son. But while the offspring we have are bright and not at all defective, I have seen the sad results inbreeding can produce.

Another friend's family has a fondness for poodles. They started off with one female who was mated with a poodle hired from a stud service. The puppies produced grew up to be fine and handsome specimens. Then the degeneracy started. Son mated with mother, producing a daughter, who mated with father, producing a son, who mated with the mother, who was also his sister. The products of this final union were two: one abnormally large, and one abnormally small, neither of which looked like poodles and both of which suffered from delirium tremens, or whatever canine epilepsy is called.

At least those dregs of poodledom didn't have psychological problems. You have heard the saying that wealthy lunatics are called eccentrics while poor loonies are simply crazy. I wonder if non-middle-class dogs suffer from psychological disorders, or whether the soft life of the urban dog who has a home makes him susceptible to developing eccentricities (fostered, one must say in all honesty, by the eccentricities of their masters). I met one black poodle in the United States who was convinced he was a cat—or so I was assured by his doting owners. There are countless stories of dogs that think they're anything but dogs. But then there are also legions of cats that think they're God's vicar on earth, so maybe it's not such a bad thing.

A traumatic puppyhood or a dysfunctional upbringing can have serious psychological effects, too. I once had an almost-pure cocker spaniel which had a fanatical hatred of mops, sprung, I am convinced, from the ordeal he must have endured when the people we bought him from docked his tail, butchering it in the process. I suspect they must have used a meat cleaver; I wouldn't be surprised if they used a mop to pummel him into submission.

A friend has the most enormous German shepherd I have ever seen (actually the largest German shepherd anyone has ever seen), but the poor brute suffers from low self-esteem. He shuffles and actually tries to hide behind chairs and under tables, trying to make himself inconspicuous. A more pathetic sight can't be imagined, sort of like those Loony Tunes characters who pick up a twig and tiptoe around thinking they can't be seen.

I can't help imagining that at this point that the convinced cat-lover will find himself convinced in his contempt for dogs. I remember Teodoro Locsin Jr. writing some years ago that he didn't like dogs because they were moronic and uninhibited in displaying their drooly affections. Stories like mine must serve to confirm the utter imbecility of dogs; but in defense of the canine population, I must insist that your liking for dogs or cats is a function of your personality. I once met Teddyboy Locsin's late, beloved cat, and it was the closest thing I ever experienced to a papal audience. For some reason I had become convinced that the cat was mythical. Then, one day, I saw a monumental Persian with fur the color of a World War I troopship dazzle-painted in great strokes of grey and white, make its stately progress from the kitchen to the living room. It approached me and seemed offended I didn't genuflect before it, so I got down on one knee and implored it to let me scratch it's chin. Then I received its apostolic benediction in the form of a purr. The point is that some people prefer the self-conscious dignity of cats, but I prefer the emperor-worship of dogs: I like to be greeted with a hearty banzai when I get home, while apparently Mr. Locsin prefers something more like the arrival of the foreign ministers at the Congress of Vienna.

Ah, but a dog with a healthy personality can't be beat. The putative uncle of two of our dogs (plus my mom's dog, who has the kilometric name of Debussy), is a prototypical Alpha male whom I have seen vanquish cocker spaniels and other dogs twice its size. And there is an amazingly plump dog belonging to another friend who is spoiled rotten but managed to keep its dignity, even when neighborhood workmen tried to buy him from a maid so they could eat it. The dog, with great aplomb, peed on the workmen's feet.

This has nothing to do with Holy Week, of course, but then how much of what many people do during the vacation actually does, these days?

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

A simple life

YOUNG BLOOD

Kitchie Canlas

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I WAS just watching the first part of "TV Patrol" minutes ago. Two news items got my attention and made me turn on my computer and write this stuff. The first one was the alleged corruption attending the purchase of equipment for the Light Rail Tranist. The other one was the planned strike of a transport group which was demanding another increase in fares.

I asked myself why there is so much corruption in the government and why so many transport groups want to increase their fare. And it led me to think of my life which is a living testimony to how hard life is today.

I am an instructor at a state college in Pampanga. My net income every month is P9,000. This may be reduced by P188 next month because I availed myself of the P5,000 cash advance offered by the Government Service Insurance System (through the e-card). Every month, there are deductions in my pay for tax, PhilHealth, policy loan, emergency loan, and life and retirement insurance.

I take a tricycle to school, which costs me P25 one way. After work in the afternoon, I hitch a ride in my colleague's van, which saves me an equal amount.

I eat packed lunch. I spend about P50 for my snacks in the morning and afternoon.

I go to the same school for my graduate education every Saturday. However, I spend more on this day because I can't get a free ride going home and I buy snacks and lunch from the canteen. In my three classes, I spend money for photocopying the readings, especially when I am the reporter for a certain topic.

In my work, I usually make handouts to facilitate the teaching-learning process. For these, I spend approximately P200 monthly. There are times when I give quizzes or exams and some of my students don't pay for their photocopying bills simply for lack of money.

I have just downgraded my Smart postpaid plan to P500 from the previous P800 so that starting next month my monthly phone bills will be approximately P700 (because most of the time, there are other charges on top of the plan).

I stay with my parents and so my meals are basically free. To help them out, I pay the monthly electricity and water bills which add up to about P1,800, thanks to the ever-increasing purchased power adjustment. I do not give money to my parents regularly though I do so to my unemployed sister.

Almost every month, there are additional deductions from my salary for death aid, help for a sick colleague, etc. Another strain on the pocket is buying gifts for friends who celebrate their birthdays and contribution to friend's relatives who die.

I rarely buy things for myself and I do not buy expensive things. Twice a month, I usually buy a pocketbook for P35 in Angeles City. Going to Angeles and back costs P52. The last time I bought a shirt at a *tiangge*, it cost me only P50. I do not eat at expensive restaurants; I normally spend only P80 for my dinner when I eat out.

I cannot itemize all my other expenses, but from my experience, I can safely say that I am living a simple and comfortable life. Despite this, I am one of so many people who count the days before receiving the next salary. I get mad whenever there is a delay in payment. There have been many times when the money in my coin purse (I do not use a wallet) was not even enough to pay the tricycle fare to school. And there have been times when I had to ask or borrow money from my mother.

Whenever I find myself in such situations, I wonder how some of my colleagues cope when they have babies who regularly need to be fed costly milk. How about the others who have children who go to school? How about those who live in apartments on which they have to pay rental? How about those who earn less than I do? And how about those who do not even have jobs?

And then I begin again to wonder, like I did when I heard those two news items on TV, why there is so much corruption in the government and why many transport groups want to increase the fare. I think and I realize that the continuous increases in prices of oil and other basic commodities led these groups to plan a strike. And I begin to wonder if this is also the reason there is so much corruption in government.

Ordinary government employees like me need to eat and have basic commodities, just like the President and other high-ranking officials and politicians. However, if I compare the way I live my life with the way they do, there's a very big difference.

I try my best to make my students learn because that is my foremost responsibility as a teacher, but I feel sad and disappointed whenever I see this very big difference in the way I live (which may be the same as how these public transport drivers live) and the way these prominent personalities live. Which makes me wonder why additional burdens are being laid on our shoulders through the imposition of new taxes when teachers are the most honest taxpayers in this country.

Anyway, I can still smile because my conscience is clear. I do my job well and there's my family to fall back on whenever my salary is delayed.

Kitchie Canlas, 25, has been an instructor for almost five years now at a state college in Pampanga.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

THEY SAID

Promise of politics

"To the victor belongs the spoils. That is the promise of politics. When such a promise is made to police officers, the PNP (Philippine National Police) is left with spoiled brats."

—Police Director Lucas Managuelod who is among 10 PNP officials on "floating status"

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Indeed, a strategic force against poverty

THE FEB. 22 editorial—on the British bank executive moved to tears while attending the housing project for the victims of the killer typhoons—elicited a lot of admiration from and among our peers. In fact, one Cabinet secretary sent us a text message, admitting that he cried after reading it.

The story of Warner Manning doing "something that comes from the heart" is just one of the many stories happening in Gawad Kalinga. In fact, the editorial's exhortation to the business community was very timely. There are now 60 major corporations that have partnered with our group and each with their own "moving" story to tell.

But it shouldn't stop there. Others should follow the lead of the Concepcions, the Albas of Prudentialife, the Morans of Red Ribbon and Med Mateo of Philips (who introduced us, by the way, to Manning), the Lorenzos of Lapanday, the Yangs of McDonald's, the Lopezes of ABS-CBN and many other chief executive officers in taking up this advocacy of addressing poverty and promoting the well-being of our less-privileged *kababayans* into a higher level of nobility.

Not that I carried a wide smile with the INQUIRER article. It is because I stood in agreement with your assertion that the business community is now actually a strategic force in fighting poverty and deprivation in this poor country.

More power to Mr. Manning! *Mabuhay ang Pilipino!*

—JONES DIZON,
executive assistant to the executive director,
Gawad Kalinga,
jones_dizon2@yahoo.com

Put up or shut up

THIS is in connection with the news item "House asked to probe Batangas 'juetengate,'" (PDI, 3/11/05) which linked our client, Armando C. Sanchez, governor of Batangas, to *jueteng*.

It is unfortunate that some Batangueños, instead of helping the present administration improve and speed up the delivery of public services, and modernize the province through a dynamic, proactive and graft-free government, have chosen instead to propagate worn-out canards, long peddled by disgraced politicians, to sabotage an honest and hard-working public servant.

The same lies were circulated in the last elections, and the people of Batangas rejected the atrocious fabrications by voting Sanchez into the governor's office by a most convincing margin, notwithstanding the superior resources and the national stature of his rivals for the post. Even the sitting vice governor, Richard Recto, who was once among the most vocal accusers of the governor during the campaign, has now openly and publicly pledged his unity with Sanchez in affirmation of the fact that the accusations linking the governor to illegal gambling have no basis.

If those misguided souls seeking a congressional investigation into the alleged illegal gambling in Batangas are honestly convinced of the truthfulness of their allegations, they should bring the matter to the proper courts, where we will gladly face them, instead of indulging in counter-productive innuendoes and colloquy. They should be prepared to back up their claims with evidence that will pass muster in the courts of law; otherwise, they should shut up.

—FERDINAND S. TOPACIO,
Topacio Law Office,
Carnation Street, Camella Classic,
Better Living, Parañaque City

Curious stand

RECENTLY, Rep. Edcel Lagman proposed that female Filipino entertainers working in Japan be no longer referred to as "*Japayukis.*" We agree. We believe that they do not deserve that derision. We are with them in their clamor for the modification of the new Japanese immigration and visa rules on their entry into and work in Japan.

The whole government apparently supports these workers. The Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo are all trying to help our *kababayans* earn their living honestly in that country. The effort, for instance, of Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo in personally following up the case in Tokyo is very laudable. Even the President herself has made her appeal.

However, the DFA has a very curious position insofar as the so-called Filipino "comfort women" are concerned.

It is on record that the present Filipino ambassador to Tokyo, Domingo Siazon, in his first term as Philippine envoy to that capital, disregarded and overruled the official position of the Philippine government for compensation of the Filipino comfort women; he sustained the policy of the Japanese government denying payment of such claims.

Now here comes Undersecretary Jose Brillantes of the DFA Migrant Workers Affairs, discouraging our lawmakers to propose a legislation that would somehow compensate these women while they are still alive, and pending final resolution of their claims by the Tokyo government.

Brillantes echoed the line of Siazon that Tokyo might have already settled the matter of compensation under the Reparations Agreement. He added that the proposed legislation might "antagonize" Japan which has provided aid to the Philippines.

The argument of these gentlemen is vacuous, to say the least. If they are not that certain the compensation is already settled, why argue in favor of the Japanese? The line on antagonizing Japan does not hold water. Japan would not offer any aid or assistance if it would not serve their interest in doing so. Besides, any aid needs counterpart funding from the Philippines. And we could hardly come up with the funds, as our country is in perpetual fiscal crisis.

Brillantes might have served in our embassy in Tokyo. Siazon, married to a Japanese, is serving his second stint as ambassador. And he was a student in Tokyo. Does conflict of interests exist here; and did it escape the Commission on Appointments?

Siazon's stand was certainly a curious one. No wonder, the mission of Romulo to Tokyo failed.

—NELSON D. LAVIÑA
ambassador (ret.),
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Politicians to blame for people's ignorance, poverty

I LOVE reading the INQUIRER, especially the column of Conrado de Quiros. I do not miss reading the editorial, too. In its Feb. 25 issue, the editorial, titled "Dishonorable," noted:

"The House itself cannot ensure that only the best, the brightest, the most upright and most moral would be elected to its ranks. It is the people who elect these representatives who have to be better educated and better informed so that they can choose the best and the most upright men and women who will legislate for them."

While this makes sense in a way, it failed to consider some important things. I would like to directly address the problem to many politicians who run for positions without the right reasons or perhaps heart for the job. I do not think the problem is with the street or rural people, who for most instances, are regarded as illiterate or uneducated for reasons of poverty. Poverty, that in the first place, worsens with the neglect or apathy of most politicians.

My point is, the poor people who for most cases are deprived of access to better education or better information are not to be blamed. They are only victims. The real "criminals" who should answer for the system that has gone corrupt are the politicians who have run for positions for the most selfish and evil of reasons, totally ignorant of or detached to the meaning of "service."

—HYACINTH MERIOLES,
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Surprised at being No. 2

I WAS very surprised when I saw the headline "RP No. 2 on Asia graft list." (PDI, 3/9/05) I believe the Philippines should have ranked first in the list of the most corrupt country—not only in Asia but worldwide. Graft and corruption makes us poor among the poorest in the world, while our politicians are among the richest. They earn millions before their terms end.

The goverment's rank and file contributes much to these woes. One of these days, I want to see some state auditors go to jail for approving and falsifying records to make illegal transactions appear legal. They are supposed to be the ordinary Filipino's last line of defense against corruption; the watchdog of the people's hard-earned money. That's why it is not surprising that some projects are left unfinished due to lack of funds.

The greatest thieves of all time are secretaries and regional directors who slash budgets in their favor. They are living like kings and queens while the taxpayers are living like mice in the dump. I hate seeing governors rule their provinces through an office that duplicates the functions of mayors—just to waste a lot of money and contribute to the very, very slow delivery of basic services, if at all they get to reach the target beneficiaries.

It is sadder to note that many of these corrupt people got their academic degrees from a state university funded with people's money.

—JOY MONTEROYO,
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SCRAP MINING ACT
MINING INC

ENVIRONMENTAL groups refuse to rest the mining issue

PDI PHOTO

Threats of large-scale mining

THE COALITION For Mother Earth reiterates its call for the abolition of the Philippine Mining Act (Republic Act 7942), which allows 100-percent foreign capitalization for mining projects and a 25-year lifetime for mining contracts, renewable for another 25 years.

The law paves the way to the exploitation of our marine resources, ancestral territories, watersheds, marshlands, forests and mineral resources. The law opens approximately 7 million hectares of lands in Mindanao to large-scale mining.

The coalition recently conducted a "protest concert" dedicated to the anti-mining cause.

According to Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Friends of the Earth/Philippines(LRC) Davao, existing mining operations have destroyed lands and resources in Mindanao, as manifested by landslides, soil erosion and pollution of underground and surface water, not to mention the mercury poisoning of schoolchildren in Apokon, Tagum, Davao del Norte.

Specifically, mining operations in Compostela, which have been going on for 10 long years, have ignited social conflicts even as they have invited militarization, led to cultural disintegration and made a significantly adverse impact on people's health. Large-scale mining is more disastrous and fatal because, in processing gold, it uses cyanide which is more dangerous than mercury.

International funding agencies recently conducted a study showing that large investments in mining have a negative impact on development.

—MICHAEL CARMEN,
239-A Pantaleon St.,
Malanday, Valenzuela City

Accountability to coconut farmers

WE support Sen. Joker Arroyo's call for the termination of the Malacañang-appointed San Miguel Corp. directors for betraying the interest of the small coconut farmers.

As was aptly pointed out by the good senator, the main function of these government representatives in the SMC is to "protect and enhance the government's interests." They were not appointed to dilute government shares in the food and beverage company. Apparently, these Malacañang-appointed representatives do not consider themselves accountable to their principals in government or to the small coconut farmers and farmworkers.

Perhaps, these Malacañang-appointed directors need to be constantly reminded that government's control and stake in the company emanate from the shares that were acquired using the coconut levy funds. These include the 27 percent of SMC shares, as decided by the Sandiganbayan, plus the 20 percent being contested by the small farmers.

By agreeing to the issuance of additional shares, these Malacañang-appointed directors have effectively diluted government's control of the firm. This is similar to the entry of Kirin Brewery in SMC. The agreement with the Japanese brewery effectively diluted the control of government over the company and reduced it to 25 percent. These directors have practically put the small farmers' interests at risk.

What the coconut farmers need are representatives who will promote and protect their interests and exercise a high degree of accountability. It is very clear that based on the decision of the Sandiganbayan, the shares in the SMC are "owned by the government [and are being held] in trust for coconut farmers." Hence, the directors are clearly accountable to both the government and the small coconut farmers.

—OMI C. ROYANDOYAN,
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Darkening shadows over EU summit

NEWS ANALYSIS

Constant Brand

BRUSSELS, Belgium—Growing fears of a French "no" vote on the European Union constitution and concerns about resuming arms sales to China overshadowed a European Union summit aimed at boosting jobs and growth.

The 25 EU leaders started their two-day meeting by approving changes in the so-called Stability and Growth Pact, which will give euro-using nations more leeway to spend their way out of an economic downturn.

"It is a pact which is more intelligent, more accepted and more respected," said French President Jacques Chirac. EU finance ministers clinched the deal on the euro-rules reform on Sunday.

During dinner talks, the leaders were expected to discuss plans to streamline economic reforms with the end-view of cutting red tape and boosting investment and employment, thereby increasing the bloc's competitiveness. They were expected to endorse the new plans at the end of their summit.

Separately, EU finance ministers were to discuss the nomination of US deputy defense chief Paul Wolfowitz as president of the World Bank. Italy and Germany have already backed his candidacy.

Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, the summit chair, was optimistic the economic reforms would get Europe's economy back on track.

He said the success of previous reforms has only been partial. "Hence there is a need to renew ... to refocus on jobs and growth," he said after pre-summit talks with union and business leaders.

Unions, however, warned that EU leaders should not put efforts to cut red tape and pension reforms ahead of workers' rights.

"We believe that it's a mistake to suggest that somehow social policy needs to be relegated a bit and competitiveness needs to be put up the priority list," said John Monks, general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation.

Diplomats said the EU's 15-year-old arms embargo against China could become an issue at the economic summit talks.

Concerns were raised last week after China passed a new law threatening to use military force against Taiwan if the island declares independence. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said China's threats have complicated the EU's position, and diplomats hint the entire process could be delayed.

Germany and France have pushed hard for the EU to lift the embargo as a political signal of EU's recognition of Beijing's growing economic and political importance.

The United States also bars arms sales to China. Both embargoes were imposed following Beijing's bloody 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.

Diplomats in Brussels, including EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, acknowledged that Beijing's threats have added complexity.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice added pressure before the summit, telling EU nations they "should do nothing" that could alter the military balance of power in Asia through the sale of sophisticated weapons.

Another issue—the ratification of the EU's new constitution, which faces a key test in France's May 29 referendum—was likely to feature in talks after a second new opinion poll suggested a majority of French voters were against the charter.

The EU constitution, signed by EU leaders in October, is meant to streamline the bloc's decision-making process and boost its role on the world stage.

In France, the constitution has been linked to an EU proposal to reform the service sectors, from construction to health care, which unions say will undermine Europe's welfare state.

Swedish Prime Minister Goeran Persson said there "was a need to have a discussion" on the proposal, adding the current one "will not fly."

An opinion poll suggests that most French voters would reject the EU constitution if a referendum were held today.

Such a rejection would be a huge political setback for the 25-nation bloc. All 25 must approve the constitution for it to take effect.

The summit, however, is meant to focus on creating jobs and growth to re-ignite the EU's flagging economy.

EU leaders are expected to acknowledge that the bloc's listless economic performance had derailed its plans, which were launched in Lisbon five years ago, to become the world's most dynamic economy by 2010. The leaders instead endorsed the scaling down of goals.

A draft of the summit statement calls for "urgent action," and adds that it is "essential to ... refocus priorities on growth and employment" to create "an attractive area in which to invest and work."

AP

INQBOX Question of the Week
What, in your opinion, lies ahead for Manny Pacquiao?
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Key in: inquirer box name/age/city/message.
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inquirer ad name/city/mailing address
to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them

10 sacks of explosives seized

From page A1

sequent recovery of this large amount of explosive has foiled a major plan of the Abu Sayyaf Group to conduct more bombings in urban centers," the Armed Forces statement said.

Enough to wreck a building

A military bomb expert said the 10 sacks of explosives could cause the collapse of a two-story building.

"If properly assembled and the explosives are placed in a car, that car bomb could bring down a ... two-story building," said Lt. Col. Lito Tabangcura, chief of the Explosives and Ordnance Division of the AFP-National Capital Region Command.

He said the damage from such car bomb could be worse if it was set off in a crowded place.

Tabangcura said the blast from one of the canisters would be "ten times the blast from a *bawang* [a local firecracker]."

The canisters, which contained a substance called black powder, are considered "low explosive" devices, he said.

"This confirms that [Khadaffy] Janjalani and Abu Solaiman are really planning something," said Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, AFP public information chief.

Islam converts

He was referring to the ASG's most senior leader and to an Abu Sayyaf commander who had warned of more bombings in Metro Manila following the deaths of ASG detainees during the prison siege at Camp Bagong Diwa almost two weeks ago.

The discovery of the explosives came a day after the arrest of Santos, who had been on the government's wanted list.

Santos is believed to be the same man identified as Dawud Muslim Del Rosario Santos on the list of wanted terrorists circulated by the government's Anti-Terrorism Task Force.

Santos is reportedly the brother of Ahmed Santos, leader of the Raja Solaiman Revolutionary Movement, an extremist group of "Balik Islam" converts.

The AFP said Santos was an Islam convert who was arrested some years ago in Anda, Pangasinan, but had been released on bail.

Santos was not presented to the media yesterday because the military said they were still conducting follow-up operations against the Raja Solaiman group.

A big blow

"Definitely, this is a big blow to them ... We might just have degraded their capability to undertake their plans," Deputy Director Avelino Razon, chief of the National Capital Region Police, said on the phone.

"We [might have just] thwarted the Abu Sayyaf's plan to carry out bombings."

Razon said the police would not let their guard down.

"We will still maintain vigilance, and a high alert level," he said, adding that the discovery of the alleged bomb materials did not necessarily mean the threat was over.

9 bombers still at large

The police earlier said at least nine bombers from two terrorist cells had been sent to Metro Manila and other key cities.

Intelligence units have not traced their whereabouts.

The apartment where the explosives were seized was rented by Ahmed Santos, according to Police Director Robert Delfin, chief of the Directorate for Intelligence.

"The threat has been reduced but the threat remains," Delfin said.

As part of the heightened security alert, some 10,000 policemen have been deployed around the metropolis, backed by 1,000 soldiers from the Armed Forces' National Capital Region Command and more than 100 members of the police's Special Action Force.

HOT STUFF: 10 sacks of explosives with enough power to blow up a 2-story building are seized by the Intelligence Service of the AFP. Lt. Col. Lito Tabangcura inspects the catch.

VAL HANDUMON

UK travel warning

Amid the Lenten terror scare, the United Kingdom yesterday renewed its travel warning to its citizens on possible terrorist attacks in the Philippines.

"There continue to be threats against Western interests and there is a danger of collateral damage from terrorist attacks targeted at others. We believe that terrorists are in the final stages of planning an attack," according to UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

"However, attacks could occur at any time, anywhere in the Philippines," the FCO said in its website.

It noted that Philippine soldiers and police had been deployed in malls, churches and vital installations across Metro Manila for the Easter holidays.

'God is on our side'

Central Police District Director Nicasio Radovan Jr. said the sacks of explosives recovered from the Fairview house contained chemical which he said was similar to potassium chlorate.

Potassium chlorate is a compound containing potassium, chlorine and oxygen. It is used in some traditional recipes for gunpowder. When mixed with some materials it could form a high explosive.

It was among the explosive materials used in the Bali, Indonesia, bombings in 2002 that killed almost 200 people.

The Bali bombings were blamed on the Southeast Asia regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah, said to be an Abu Sayyaf partner in terror.

Radovan said the discovery was a good sign that terrorist activities in the metropolis would be foiled by law enforcers.

"We're lucky. God is still on our side," he said. *Reports from Volt Contreras, Luige A. del Puerto and DJ Yap*

Doggone it, K9 boner creates panic at airport

By Nikko Dizon

AN ABANDONED attaché case and two aging, bomb-sniffing dogs named Roy and Mara set off alarm bells at the Manila Domestic Airport yesterday.

Sniffing around the airport amid heightened security, the male Roy and the bitch Mara apparently caught some suspicious scent coming from the attaché case and sat on the luggage, indicating the possible presence of explosives.

Tension gripped the airport as the police and members of the Explosives and Ordnance Division (OED) rushed to the scene and cordoned off the area.

It was all a false alarm.

When it was opened, the attaché case contained nothing more than documents.

The luggage, it turned out, was owned by Northern Samar Gov. Raul Daza, who apparently absent-mindedly left it in the arrival area before he was to board a Cebu Pacific flight to his hometown.

The incident happened at around 9:30 a.m., said Brig. Gen. Angel Atutubo, assistant general manager for security and emergency services at the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA).

On seeing the unattended attaché case, security guards and passengers, aware of government warnings that terrorists might strike this Holy Week, promptly called in the authorities.

The commotion held up traffic along the Domestic Road.

The two dogs are both Belgian Malinois and are estimated to be 10 years old, Supt. Pablo Francisco Balagtas, chief of the 2nd Police Center for Aviation Securit, told the INQUIRER.

Dogs can be misled

Any of several factors could have led to the false alarm, Balagtas said.

One is the age of the dogs, another is that their "handler"—the officer who leads them—hasn't had enough training, or the item sniffed might be contaminated, he said.

Asphalt, for example, could give off an odor similar to that of gunpowder, Balagtas added.

He said that while dogs were trained to sniff for gunpowder and explosives, they also got cues from their handlers.

Dogs retested

"If the handler is tense, so will the dog be," he said.

Atutubo said: "We will have the canine reevaluated."

Balagtas, on his part, hinted there might be need to review the performance of the handler.

Suspect says . . .

From page A1

Solaiman gave the orders for such attacks sometime during the first week of March.

The military has described Rohmat, 25, as a bomb expert who served as the liaison officer of the regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah with the Abu Sayyaf bandits.

If Rohmat's claims are true, the ASG had apparently planned to launch new bombings in key Philippine cities even before the March 14 failed jailbreak at Camp Bagong Diwa, where at least 22 Abu Sayyaf detainees, including three senior ASB leaders, were killed.

The ASG has claimed responsibility for the Valentine's Day bombings in the cities of Makati, Davao and General Santos which killed eight people and wounded more than 150.

"I heard the plans of Khadafy and Abu Sulaiman," Rohmat told reporters speaking in Tagalog, showing a good grasp of the dialect.

'Blow up Mindanao'

"They wanted to blow up Mindanao, either of the two, Davao or Cagayan de Oro, and another one in Manila. They said the plan was to be carried out in the last week of March."

The military said Rohmat had been in the country for five years, which might explain his fluency in Tagalog.

Rohmat told reporters Janjalani gave a certain MILF member P100,000 cash to conduct the bombing.

The military asked reporters to withhold the identity of the supposed MILF operative. But the ABS-CBN News Channel identified him as a certain Abdul Basid.

Asked if the latest plot involved another bus bombing, like the one that occurred in Makati last Feb. 14, Rohmat replied: "Maybe it's something like that because I just heard about the plan from them. Then they gave the member of the MILF the money."

'Crowded places'

He said he did not know which specific places were to be bombed.

"No specific place was mentioned, except that it should be crowded places. It was not mentioned if it was a mall, a terminal or what."

Rohmat denied a military claim that he was the one who trained the MILF operative.

He said it was slain JI terror suspect Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, also an Indonesian national, who carried out trainings for MILF members.

Military and defense authorities have refused to directly link the MILF "as an organization" to terrorists, despite having arrested some MILF members for alleged terrorist acts.

Rohmat denied any participation in any planned bombings, saying his was limited to training.

Janjalani alive

He admitted personally knowing the detained suspects in the Feb. 14 attacks, such as Angelo Trinidad alias Abu Khalil, Gamal Baharan alias Tapay and Gappal Bannah alias Boy Negro.

He said Janjalani himself trained these men.

Rohmat said Janjalani was well and alive and not wounded, contrary to the military's claim he was wounded or killed in a military bombing in Maguindanao last year.

He said he was with Janjalani and Solaiman during that raid. While he was seriously wounded, the two leaders, who were just a meter away from him, were unscathed, he said.

According to Rohmat, 23 Indonesian JI members are still training in the ASG's Camp Jabal Quba in Lanao del Sur.

He also spoke of ASG members being sheltered in MILF territory.

Spare the children

During the 20-minute interview, Rohmat spoke almost sheepishly. He chuckled when asked if he wanted to be a state witness.

Rohmat sat in front of the cameras, his hands cuffed under the table.

When asked if he now felt remorseful, he said, "Yes, something like that, because I did it, I was really involved in the bombings."

When pressed to give a message to ASG members, he gave another sheepish smile.

Then he said: "Don't push through with the plans because it seems that many children were being hit. And civilians at that."

"Fight the war in the battlefields, like Jolo, so the children would be spared." *With reports from Volt Contreras, Luige A. del Puerto, DJ Yap*

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SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2005

RIZAL PROVINCE (CAINTA)

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 11:00PM – THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT ST. ANTHONY 61ZN

Venus Steel Corporation and Midland Steel Corporation.

REASON: Maintenance work inside Meralco – St. Anthony substation.

MONDAY TO TUESDAY, MARCH 28-29, 2005

MANILA AND MAKATI CITY

BETWEEN 11:30PM AND 12:00MN (MON., 03/28/05) AND THEN BETWEEN 5:00AM AND 5:30AM (TUE., 03/29/05) – PORTIONS OF CIRCUIT STA. MESA 41F – STA. ANA 45VN

Portion of San Andres and Augusto Francisco St. from near Ciriaco Tuason St. to Mercurio St.

Portion of Dagohoy and Estrada Sts. from Coral to Oro-A Sts. including Nakar, Ruby, Zafiro, Alabastro, Topacio, Crisolita, Granate, Concha, Onyx, A. Marina, Radium, Chromium, Raymundo and Mercurio Sts. in San Andres Bukid.

Portion of Tejeron, Pedro Gil (Herran), Plaza Felipe G. Calderon, New Panaderos and F. Roxas Sts. from Augusto Francisco St. to near Rev. Aglipay (Blumentritt) Sts. including alternate feed of Marcelo Steel in Pandacan and Sta. Ana.

BETWEEN 11:30PM (MON., 03/28/05) AND 5:30AM (TUE., 03/29/05) – PORTION OF CIRCUITS PACO 416VY – STA. ANA 47VN; AND STA. MESA 41F – STA. ANA 46VN

Portion of Augusto Francisco St. from Mercurio St. to near Tejeron St.

Portion of Pasig Line St. and Imelda Ave. from Pedro Gil (Herran) St. in San Andres Bukid, Manila to near Pasong Tirad St. in Bgy. Singkamas, Makati City.

REASON: Line construction work along Augusto Francisco St. and Pasig Line St. in Pandacan, Manila.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2005

CAVITE

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 8:15AM AND THEN BETWEEN 4:45PM AND 5:00PM – THE WHOLE OF CIRCUITS SILANG 33WS AND TAGAYTAY 36XS

Portion of Gen. E. Aguinaldo Highway from Meralco-Tagaytay substation to near GMA National Road including Dragon Textile Mills and Unipros Ceramics in Silang.

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 5:00PM – THE WHOLE OF CIRCUITS SILANG 32WS, 34WS AND 35WS AND TAGAYTAY 32XS, 33XS, 34XS AND 35XS

The whole of Tagaytay City, Alfonso, Amadeo and Mendez.

The whole town of Silang except Bgys. Maguyam, Bulihan and Milagrosa.

Bgys. Karasutsi and Pilipit in Indang.

Bgy. Pulo Ni Sara in Maragondon.

REASON: Transco maintenance work along Dasmariñas – Silang – Tagaytay 115 kV transmission line.

TUESDAY TO WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29-30, 2005

PASAY CITY

BETWEEN 11:00PM AND 11:30PM (TUE., 03/29/05) AND THEN BETWEEN 2:30AM AND 3:00AM (WED., 03/30/05) – PORTION OF CIRCUIT TEGEN 57B

Portion of F. B. Harrison St. and Sen. Gil J. Puyat Ave. (Buendia) from M. Layug St. to and including one-feed of Manila Film Center, E. Rodriguez (Salud), San Juan and Perla Sts. in Bgy. San Jose.

BETWEEN 11:00PM (TUE., 03/29/05) AND 3:00AM (WED., 03/30/05) – PORTION OF CIRCUIT TEGEN 57B

Portion of Diosdado Macapagal Ave. from near Sen. Gil J. Puyat Ave. Ext. to and including PNB Financial Center Complex and World Trade Center.

REASON: Relocation of facilities affected by DPWH road widening project along Diosdado Macapagal Ave. in Pasay City.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2005

QUEZON CITY

BETWEEN 1:00AM AND 3:00AM – PORTION OF CIRCUIT BALINTAWAK 57E

Portion of Tandang Sora Ave. from Real Village 1 to near Hilda Village in Bgy. Tandang Sora.

REASON: Various maintenance work along Tandang Sora Ave. and Quirino Highway in Bgy. Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

MANDALUYONG CITY

BETWEEN 12:01AM AND 1:00AM – THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT SM-SHANGRI-LA 42VR

Shangri-La Plaza Mall and SM-Megamall Bldg. A in Ortigas Center.

REASON: Preventive maintenance and testing work inside Meralco – SM-Shangri-La substation.

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2005

MANDALUYONG CITY

BETWEEN 12:01AM AND 1:00AM – THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT SM-SHANGRI-LA 53VR

EDSA Shangri-La Hotel & Resort and SM-Megamall Bldg. B in Ortigas Center.

REASON: Preventive maintenance and testing work inside Meralco – SM-Shangri-La substation.

QUEZON PROVINCE (TIAONG AND SAN ANTONIO)

BETWEEN 9:00AM AND 5:00PM – PORTION OF CIRCUIT TIAONG 11WE

Portion of Tiaong – San Antonio Provincial Road from Meralco – Tiaong substation in Bgy. Quipot to and including the whole town of San Antonio, Bgys. San Agustin, San Francisco, Bula, Bahia and San Jose in Tiaong.

REASON: Conversion of portion of 6.24 kV circuit Tiaong 11WE to 20 kV system.

SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2005

CAVITE

BETWEEN 7:00AM AND 7:15AM AND THEN BETWEEN 11:45AM AND 12:00NN – THE WHOLE OF CIRCUITS ROSARIO 42RS AND 43RS, ABUBOT 37XZ, 38XZ AND 39XZ AND CAVITE 12ZD, 13ZD, 16ZD AND 19ZD

The whole of Cavite City, Noveleta and Rosario.

Portion of Gen. E. Aguinaldo Highway from Meralco-Imus substation to near Meralco-Pala-Pala substation including Metro Dialysis Center, Metrobank in Imus; Arcontica Subd. Resort, Villa Remedios, Southfield Subd., Salitran I, Dara Subd., Philia Industries, Villa Luisa Homes, portion of Don Placido Campo Drive, Magsaysay Institute of Shipping, Via Verde Village, Canlimbuhan Rice Mill, St. Charbel South, Cityland Greenbreeze Subd., Bo. Lankaan, Magno Gonzales, Sitio de Fuego in Dasmariñas; Monterey Farms, Berlite Industries, Gen. Trias-Amadeo Road, ADC Ready Mix, Bgy. Manggahan, Metro South Subd. and Sitio Santusan in Gen. Trias.

Along Salitran Road including Sunnycrest Village, Summerwind Village, Summer Meadow Subd., South Meridian Homes, Garden Grove 1-4, Andreaville Executive Homes, Orchard Golf and Country Club and Raintree Homes in Dasmariñas.

Portion of Molino Road from Salitran Road to near Queen's Row Road including San Miguel I, Georgetown Heights Subd., St. Mary Homes, Springville West, Molino 3, Annaville Subd. and Progressive Village 5 in Bacoor.

Portion of Gov. D. Mangubat Ave. from Gen. E Aguinaldo Highway to Congressional South Road including University Medical Center, Jopauen Realty, Student Village, Bgy. Burol, Manuela Village, Summerwind IV and Southcrest Village in Dasmariñas.

Along Congressional South Road including Burol I and II, Areas C and H, Sta. Fe, Clusters B and D, San Francisco, Citihomes, Bo. San Mateo, Bo. Pag-asa, Victoria Reyes Props., Acacia Homes, San Andres 2 and San Roque in Dasmariñas.

REASON: Transco maintenance work inside Trans-Co-Rosario substation.

LAS PIÑAS CITY

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 8:30AM AND THEN BETWEEN 3:30PM AND 4:00PM – PORTIONS OF CIRCUIT AYALA-ALABANG 414WR

Portion of Alabang-Zapote Road from Don Manolo Blvd. to and including DBP Ave., Lovina, Ocampo, Licaros, Zalamea, Virata, T. S. Cruz, Sampaguita, Aster, Rosal, Ilang-ilang, Bougainvilla, Dahlia, Gladiola, Jasmin, De la Rosa Sts., portions of Concha Cruz Drive and Buencamino St., DBP Housing, T. S. Cruz Subd., Castillo Park Subd., Don Mariano Lim Complex, Sanwares, Asia Retail Corp., Smart Communications, Doña Martha Bldg., Double Fashion, Phil. Data Networking, Metro Inc., La Fuerza, Toyota-Alabang and BOIE in Bgys. Almanza Uno and Dos.

Portion of Alabang-Zapote Road from Manila Doctor's Road to and including Mayuga Road, Mayuga Compound, Veraville Homes I, Veraville Subd., Manila Doctor's Village, Acacia and Banaba Sts. in Bgy. Almanza Uno.

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 4:00PM – PORTION OF CIRCUIT AYALA-ALABANG 414WR

Portion of Alabang-Zapote Road from near Veraville Homes I to near DBP Ave. including Francel Homes in Bgy. Almanza Uno.

Along CRM Ave. from Alabang-Zapote Road to near CRM Gloria St. including Goodyear Park Subd., St. Joseph, Divine, Cadena de Amor, Hospital, Annie, Amelita, Smiling, Betty, Lovely, Carol, Dulce Sts., Las Piñas College, St. Joseph Subd., Las Piñas Doctor's Hospital, BF Homes School, BF Homes-Almanza and Holy Family Church in Bgy. Almanza Dos.

REASON: Various maintenance work along Alabang-Zapote Road in Bgy. Almanza Uno, Las Piñas City.

MERALCO exerts all efforts to restore electric service as scheduled. However, there are instances when due to unavoidable circumstances, restoration may extend beyond the published schedule.

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Ailing Pope makes 1-minute, silent appearance

From page A1

The chief of the Pope's medical team, reacting to suggestions in the Italian media that the Pope's health had deteriorated suddenly, ruled out that John Paul might be sent back to the hospital after his discharge 10 days ago.

"No hospitalization of John Paul II is planned," the ANSA news agency quoted Dr. Rodolfo Proietti as saying.

But the Apcom news agency, quoting unnamed sources, said Tuesday that John Paul wasn't responding well to his medications and was vomiting. The agency said the Pontiff was suffering from overall weakness and "strong" headaches.

"Unfortunately, things are not going as well as we would have hoped," a Vatican monsignor was quoted by Reuters as saying.

"It is clear the Pope is suffering a lot," said another cleric who works in the Vatican.

John Paul has scaled back his appearances since his back-to-back hospitalizations, and has designated cardinals to take his place during this week's busy Holy Week ceremonies.

Easter Sunday blessing

The Vatican only has confirmed one appointment for the Pontiff—an Easter Sunday blessing.

The Pope did not name a stand-in, however, for a Way of the Cross procession at the Colosseum on Good Friday, the day Christians commemorate Christ's passion and death.

The Pope, who also suffers from Parkinson's disease, which affects muscle control and makes it difficult for him to speak clearly, had hoped to be able to attend the ritual.

Vatican Television officials said they had installed cables and other equipment in the Pope's apartment above St. Peter's Square for the possible transmission of a video to be seen by the pilgrims gathered at the Colosseum.

The Pope has made three public appearances since being discharged from the hospital—his latest on Palm Sunday when he blessed the crowd silently from his third-floor window.

During that appearance, the Pontiff pressed his hand to his head and pounded a lectern in apparent frustration over his difficulty in responding to the crowd.

It was the first time in 26 years as pope that he was unable to preside over the Mass ushering in Holy Week, the most important season on the Christian calendar and long one of his favorite appointments.

'Perfectly sound mentally'

While his physical condition is "fragile," John Paul is "perfectly sound mentally," Cardinal Camillo Ruini, who stood in for the Pope on Palm Sunday, said in an interview with the Italian magazine religious affairs weekly Famiglia Cristiana.

Ruini said the Pope "continues to carry out the acts of government and to assume the major decisions, as he has always done."

John Paul has been convalescing at the Vatican following the Feb. 24 throat surgery to insert a tube in his windpipe and ease his second breathing crisis in less than a month.

He still has the tube, known as a cannula, in his throat to help him breathe and medical experts have said he will most likely have to keep it there for the rest of his life.

Medical staff have to keep the tube clean and clear of secretions in order to avert breathing problems and minimize the risk of infection.

The Pope's gaunt appearance the few times he has been seen has led to speculation in the Italian media that his condition has suffered a sharp setback.

Vatican officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, have denied there has been any sudden crisis, but acknowledge the convalescence may be behind schedule.

No details

No details on his state of health have been released since the Pope's return to the Vatican on March 13.

The Vatican, however, says the Pope is carrying out his major duties. On Tuesday, it reported the Pope had named new bishops in the Ivory Coast and Spain. Under church law, only a pope can nominate bishops.

But it is not clear when the Pope will be able to resume his regular activities. His only scheduled international trip, to a World Youth Day event in Germany in August, is highly doubtful, sources said. *AP, Reuters*

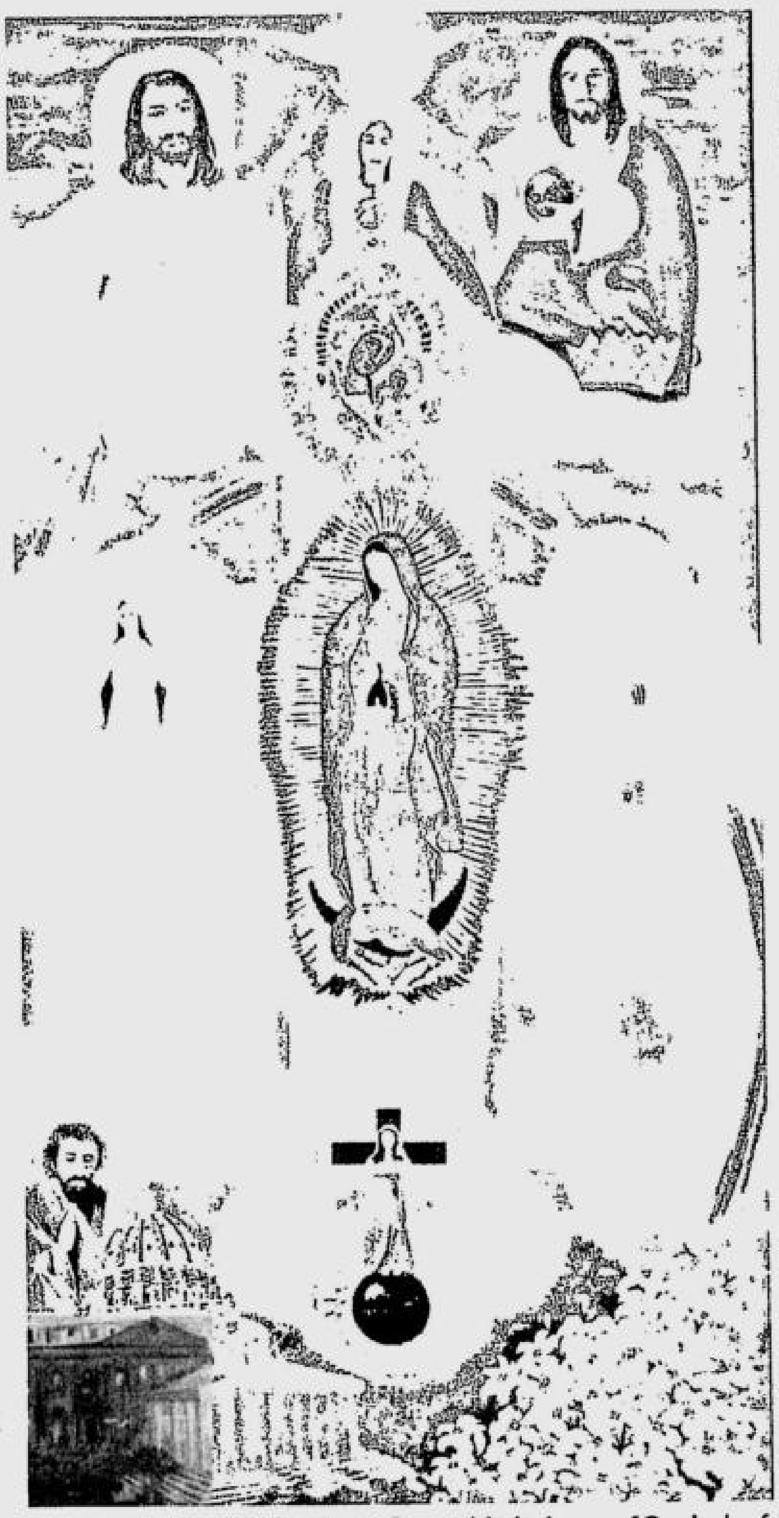
The Pope live on Easter

THE EASTER Mass and the "Urbi et Orbi" (To the city and to the world) Easter message of Pope John Paul II will be seen and heard live via satellite on Philippine television on Easter Sunday.

The National Office of Mass Media headed by Fr. Jim Reuter, S.J., said the telecast will be beamed over Channel 4 and Channel 5 from 4:25 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.; on Channel 13, 7 to 8 p.m.; on Studio 23, 10:45 p.m. to 1 a.m.; Channel 9, 11 p.m. to 1.15 a.m.; and Channel 7, 1.40 a.m. to 4:10 a.m. on Monday.

Luminous Cross of Grace rising in Quezon town

From page A1



THE PAINTING of the Luminous Cross with the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the center done by Aia Halili who was commissioned by a visionary. DONALD TAPAN

THE BAYANIHAN spirit is on full display at the obscure, coastal town of Agdangan in Quezon as even children help in the building of the sanctuary of the Luminous Cross of Grace.

The Agdangan townsfolk believe that grace from the enshrined Holy Eucharist in the edifice will help them in their personal lives and in the struggle to rid their community of illegal gambling, corruption, environmental degradation, drug dealing, alcoholism and despondency over poverty.

The inspiration for building the sanctuary came in 2003, the same year a boyish, fair-complexioned priest took over the San Isidro Labrador parish. Fr. Raul Enriquez, better known as Father Puti, immediately bore down hard on *jueteng, tupadas* and excessive drinking in the community.

"Agdangan can cleanse itself," said Enriquez, who has built a reputation as a fiery reformer. He told his flock that things can change when they accept that the path to Jesus Christ is to follow in His ways.

Mysterious ways

The Agdangan faithful see the building of the sanctuary as a sign that the Lord looks with favor on the developments in their parish. Travelers to the parish now come from all over, and miraculous healings and stories of conversions have started to abound.

That God works in mysterious ways is not lost on many who are working on the project which is turning to reality in the fifth-class town of Agdangan in the impoverished and insurgency-wracked Bondoc peninsula.

Powerhouse of grace

Enriquez said the image of the Luminous Cross of Grace first came to San Isidro Labrador parish on Oct. 26, 2003 through Metro Manila-based Agdanganin artist, Rommel Salvacion.

According to Enriquez, Salvacion presented him a copy of a painting of the Luminous Cross of Grace which he was commissioned to do by a foreign visionary based on messages that the visionary said came from the Blessed Mother. Salvacion, Enriquez said, had just returned from a trip to the Vatican where Salvacion and Bishop Precioso Cantillas of Leyte presented to the Pope John Paul II another copy of the painting.

Marian images

The painting has a luminous cross with the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Queen of Divine Will, at the center of the cross. Four other Marian images are on the corners of the cross. Above it is a depiction of the coronation of the Blessed Mother as Queen of Heaven and Earth by the Holy Trinity.

On Aug. 7, 2004, a group of healers, missionaries and Marian devotees visited Agdangan to meet with Enriquez. The group was led by Cynthia C. Lazo, a Marian devotee and director of the Department of Tourism Bureau of Domestic Tourism Promotions which looks into the development of Philippine pilgrimage sites.

Lazo said she set out to meet with Enriquez with a group after she received a vision on Aug. 1 while praying at the Temple of God the Father in Binangonan, Rizal.

She saw in her mind a book on a red pillow, after seeing cherubims carry in their hands the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary and several other images.

The book in her mind

How uncanny, she said, that while she was seeing this book, her companion Rey Obfenda, who also has the so-called third eye, urged her to will the book to open in her mind. Lazo said Obfenda asked her to look at the names and dates written on some of the pages. It became evident to her that Obfenda was also seeing the vision at the same time.

Lazo said the book opened to Page 7 and there she saw the date: Aug. 21. Obfenda told her to open the book on Page 5. Lazo said in her mind, she opened the book to Page 5, and there, a set of names appeared one by one, just like the names of actors appear in movie credits.

List of names

The names were: Mang Joe Pulan (now deceased), healer Baba Pajarito, Rey Obfenda, Cynthia Lazo, school teacher Raquel Tolentino, pranic healing teacher Faith Sawey and Fr. Raul Enriquez.

It was strange, Lazo said, to note that she knew everyone in the list. To find out what the vision meant, she reached Father Enriquez who agreed to meet with her group. With her were Pajarito, Pulan and Obfenda.

During their meeting, Lazo informed Enriquez of the inspirations that occurred with her and Obfenda on separate occasions, about the Luminous Cross, with the image of the Resurrected Christ, the Sacred Host, coming together in a seaside landscape. She said she also had repeated visions of Our Lady of Guadalupe between the time she saw the names in her mind and the time of the Agdangan visit.

Connectivity

It was thus a delight for Lazo to see that the San Isidro Labrador Church in Agdangan had the Resurrected Christ with the Sacred Host behind it on its altar. The altar was built in 1999 by Fr. Noel Cabungcal.

She said she told Enriquez that it was also heartening for her to note that Agdangan, on the Bondoc Peninsula, rests on the Pacific Ocean on one side, and on the China Sea, on the other side. "I found out that Agdangan is a seaside community with a parish church that bears the Resurrected Christ and the Sacred Host!" she enthused, finding connectivity with her visions and Enriquez.

Collective visions

Lazo said Enriquez later showed them the copy of the Luminous Cross of Grace painted by Salvacion. They were all astonished to see the painting as a clear depiction of their collective visions, Lazo said.

She said she was very elated upon seeing that the Luminous Cross also bore Our Lady of Guadalupe at its center as this image kept coming back to her before the meeting with Enriquez.

Inspiration

Inspirations on the building of the sanctuary were traced to as far back as 1968.

Enriquez said some parishioners told him that in 1968, the late Fr. Modesto Bonzon, the former parish priest of San Isidro Labrador Church, dreamt that a structure in the form of a chalice and a Eucharist would be built beside the church.

Enriquez also said that he had contemplated on remodeling an unfinished bell tower built beside the church in 1968 by Father Bonzon.

But on Sept. 12, 2004, Msgr. Oscar Leano, vicar general of the Diocese of Lucena City, officiated in a Mass at the San Isidro Labrador and suggested to Enriquez the building of a separate structure beside the church. It was the feast day of the Holy Name of Mary.

Design elements

Working on Monsignor Leano's suggestion, Enriquez asked Aia Halili last year to design a separate structure. Halili and her husband Roldan were former residents of San Francisco, California. Family business and personal considerations prompted the couple to leave the United States and return home to the Philippines in 1992 with their two children.

Halili said that upon arrival in Manila, she said a prayer: "I told Him I would change my life, that I would be like water and He would be my vessel, and I asked Him to pour me out where he wants me to."

Offerings to the Lord

Halili said severe bouts with allergies had brought her to the brink of death several times in 1999. She said that each day since then had been opportunities for offerings to the Lord, like this sanctuary project.

Halili, in collaboration with engineer Rey Zerrudo and the staff of Cotta Builders, finished the design of the sanctuary in 30 days.

Halili said Enriquez told her to make the sanctuary rise 120 feet high to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. Fourteen Stations of the Cross also mark the ascent to the top of the sanctuary.

Play of light, shadows

When she inspected the site, Halili said she was delighted to see that the stained-glass windows in the San Isidro church bore the figure of a chalice with a holy host on top, providing her an affirmation of her design.

Unknown to Enriquez, Halili has had experience in projects featuring light refraction and play of shadows. With the help of Raymund Salvacion, a solar-powered device will emit a 1,000-foot light beam to be set up from the bottom to illuminate the cross at night.

A mix of mirrors, spotlights, light beams and movable steel panels on the 8-feet by 5- feet cross then becomes a play of refractions and illuminations.

Most striking

What was most striking in the final design were what they said were the divine affirmations of the project.

Halili said a photo taken in Rome at the time of visit to the Pope by Bishop Cantillas and Salvacion, showed a lighted figure that bore an uncanny resemblance to the shape of the sanctuary's structure as designed. It showed an "M" figure, on top of which was a cross with light bursting at the center.

In November 2004, Halili's design staff took the photo and matched it with the sanctuary's front elevation. Much to their amazement, the proportions of the elevation fitted the reflection perfectly.

Not just another project

Halili said: "The design started like any other project, no special occurrences, just another project, a sanctuary ... I understand that the following events are mysterious. How can one even attempt to explain these affirmations. I conclude that this is God's project, we are invited to be partners in His Divine plan."

Community spirit

Halili estimated the sanctuary project to cost P17 million. The architectural and engineering services are free. Halili travels to Agdangan once a week to oversee the construction.

The parishioners and supporters have committed assistance in terms of free labor and resources in true *bayanihan* style.

Supporters

Groups, such as the Servants of the Luminous Cross of Grace headed by co-presidents Dr. Paz Carandang and Ching Zapanta, the Sariaya Quadro Centennial Foundation Inc., the Pangasinan Marian Group, and Café Lupe group led by Alvin Carranza, are pitching in efforts together with Agdanganins, Quezonians and other believers overseas.

Carandang, a cardiologist, recently came from the United States, where she solicited funds for the sanctuary. But the trip was not without suffering on her part. She wanted to come home earlier to minister to a very sick sister but couldn't book a flight. "People involved in the project find great joy being part of it even as this work of God involves its twin of sacrifices. The joy is in the offering," said Carandang.

Father Reuter

Carandang, Halili and Lazo recently sought an audience with the venerable Jesuit priest, Fr. James Reuter, to brief him on the project.

The Luminous Cross of Grace Sanctuary is "unique and one of a kind in the world. It is shaped like a chalice and the Eucharist which is the symbol of the Marian Eucharistic Year," Reuter was quoted as saying. "It will be a prayer brigade for all, to unify the clergy, the different religious movements and sectors that help the sick and the poor. It will make the Filipino smile."

God's masterpiece

Enriquez believes the sanctuary in Agdangan is a done deal. It is God's project and His masterpiece, he said.

Where will the money come from? "He will provide," the activist priest said.

(Those interested to support the Luminous Cross of Grace Sanctuary are enjoined to call Dr. Paz Carandang at 815-9911, local 2367; Ms Aia Halili, 997-4855, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mondays to Fridays; 09186618581; 09159928421, or e-mail luminouscross@yahoo.com)

Erring policemen ...

From page A1

crucifixion during an annual reenactment of Jesus Christ's final hours.

Dozens of Filipino devotees observe Good Friday by volunteering to be nailed to wooden crosses in what has become a tourist attraction in Asia's most populous Roman Catholic country. *(See related story in Metro, Page A23.)*

Absent without leave

This year, the Central Luzon regional police command is giving officers who have been absent without leave a chance to redeem themselves by joining the Lenten rites, Senior Insp. Joanna Ponseca said.

Those absent for a short period can escape disciplinary measures by carrying a heavy wooden cross, under the proposal by Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, Ponseca said.

Those absent for 100 days should volunteer to be crucified—but they can have their hands and feet tied by ropes rather than nailed down, Ponseca said.

"Albano wants to take this time to forgive those who want to return to the service," she explained. "This is a second chance being given to them and a chance for them to show they are really sorry."

19 cops

The regional commander can suspend or fire officers who have been absent without leave.

As of Wednesday, 19 policemen were candidates for carrying a cross at Camp Olivas police headquarters in San Fernando, Pampanga, Ponseca said. Officers will be asked to wear their uniform trousers, a black T-shirt and a black shroud to cover their faces during the procession. *AP*

Muslim volunteers to guard churches

By Margaux C. Ortiz

"GO ON, it is safe to pray inside your churches."

The head of the National Muslim Peace and Order Coordinating Council (NMPOCC) yesterday gave this advice to their "Christian brothers and sisters" amid reports that terrorists were targeting churches this Holy Week.

The NMPOCC traces its roots to the Metro Manila Muslim Peace and Order Coordinating Council which was set up nine years ago.

NMPOCC Chair Datu Amerol-Gulam Ambiong yesterday said they had deployed a hundred Muslim volunteers in different Manila churches to look out for possible terrorists.

"I believe that we have the ability to recognize possible terrorists especially if they claim to be members of the Islam faith," Ambiong told the Inquirer.

Ambiong said the volunteers came from different Muslim communities in Metro Manila.

He added that he had offered the suggestion to WPD District Director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong to show that Metro Manila Muslims are "good, law-abiding citizens."

"We also want to prove that we care for our Christian brothers and sisters especially because this time of the year is very important to them," Ambiong said.

The Muslim leader also said they would try to coordinate with National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Director Avelino Razon Jr. so they could deploy volunteers in other Metro Manila churches as well.

Ambiong, however, clarified that the volunteers would be posted outside the churches.

"We would like to assure them (Christians) that they could pray and worship inside their church without worrying about terrorist attacks," Ambiong said. "We would be there to look out for them."

Ambiong said PNP officials led by Razon and Bulaong briefed the volunteers on how to detect potential terrorists yesterday.

"The volunteers would surround the churches and grill suspicious-looking individuals," Ambiong explained.

The NMPOCC chief also said the volunteers were briefed on how to check vehicles for possible car bombs.

Ambiong said that he designated 12 of their members to guard the Ermita Church, 30 in Quiapo, and another 40 at the Sto. Domingo Church.

He added that the volunteers would be making the rounds of the other churches during the Holy Week.

"We make sure that we cover the major places of worship because the terrorists always target areas where there are plenty of people," Ambiong said.

He added that he would require the heads of each of Metro Manila's 60 Muslim organizations to provide the PNP with their own volunteers so they could "protect" more churches.

"We had a dialogue on Wednesday with the PNP where we said we would also coordinate this activity with our brothers in other parts of the country," Ambiong said.

Keep your homes safe while you are away, cops say

By Tina G. Santos and Jocelyn R. Uy

GO AHEAD, take a break. But keep your home safe as you go on vacation this Holy Week.

Criminal elements, particularly thieves, usually take advantage of the occasion knowing many homes are left unattended, said National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) director Avelino Razon.

"As much as possible don't leave your house unattended," Razon said. "Have somebody look after it. Otherwise, they should coordinate with their barangay officials and seek regular patrols around their unattended homes."

Police cars deployed

Razon said he had directed the deployment of police cars to conduct police visibility patrols in barangays and subdivisions, in coordination and in support of security personnel and barangay officials.

Meanwhile, Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong, Western Police District director, called on residents to be vigilant by reporting to authorities suspicious individuals in their communities.

Bulaong said the WPD already deployed "secret agents" to different bus terminals and shipping lines in the North and South Harbor.

The WPD is also deploying more than 3,000 policemen including motorcycle and mobile patrol units.

Safe against fire

For his part, Pasay City fire marshal Vicente Godines asked those leaving home this Holy Week to secure their property against fire.

Switching off home appliances does not guarantee that these would not cause fire, he told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"Even though they are already turned off, but remained unplugged, there is still voltage coming in to the appliances," he explained, adding that this could lead to short-circuiting, which might cause a fire.

"So better yet, they must switch off the main fuse," he added.

He also reminded the public to check on electrical wirings and gas tanks for leaks, which are among the major sources of fire.

Candles, which would be widely used this Holy Week, must not be left unattended, he said.

Despite reminders of firefighters to the public, a fire broke out in Pasay City before dawn yesterday.

The blaze broke out in a room on the ground floor of the house of Melvin Salangotes at 380 Interior Geronimo St., Malibay.

Initial investigation revealed that some children were playing with a lit candle in the room, which was eventually engulfed in flames.

The fire, which started at 1:20 a.m., razed 30 houses and left 150 families homeless.

"The houses were partly concrete and the rest were made of light materials," Godines explained why the fire spread quickly.

Arson investigators said the fire was put out at 4:44 a.m. and placed damages at P5 million.

No one was reported hurt during the incident.

Homeward-bound for the Easter break, Metro Manilans crowd the metropolis' bus stations and ship terminal. Traveler below takes a catnap while waiting for her ride.

JOAN BONDOC

Cops use guilt trip on hoods

By Nancy C. Carvajal and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

WHEN all else seem to have failed, remind troublemakers that Jesus died for them.

Today, when Northern Police District officials hold the third year of their version of the stations of the cross, the rite would take them through a depressed community, which they consider notorious for lawlessness.

Senior Supt. Rufino Druja explains why: "If they (criminals) could not be stopped by man-made laws, maybe they could be stirred by reminding them of God's suffering."

Twelve men: 10 police officials and two barangay chairmen, will be carrying a 25 kilogram wooden cross on a three-kilometer trek, which would pass by Libis Espina in Caloocan City.

The police said Libis Espina was home to troublemakers.

"Baka madala sa dasal," Druja said.

Newly appointed district director Senior Supt. Raul Gonzales will lead the march, Druja said.

In Marikina City, police officials and their men will be going around the 14 police precincts, where a station of the cross has been erected.

"This is the time for us to reflect about our relationship with God," city police chief Felipe Rojas Jr. told the INQUIRER.

On Good Friday, a morning prayer will be held at police headquarters near City Hall at 7 a.m.

From there, policemen will visit every precinct.

City Hall employees are also expected to join the rite.

"We are on full alert. I thought why not we hold our own Stations of the Cross? Everyone is present anyway," Rojas said.

No special treatment —MMDA

By Tarra V. Quismundo

WHAT special plates? What exemption?

Special license plates, such as those bearing names of organizations and other agencies, are still subject to the number coding scheme, officials of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority said this week.

"The MMDA does not give any exemption to any group because if it does, then why can't it give the same privileges to other groups?" said Angelito Vergel de Dios, MMDA Traffic Operations Center executive director.

Vergel de Dios related that motorists who had bought plates bearing "Alay Lakad" and the initials "TMG" (Traffic Management Group) had been asking about number coding exemptions.

"Those who sell these plates illegally make the exemption their come-on to prospective buyers. Do not buy from them, because they are illegal," he said of the car plates that have proliferated in Metro Manila.

Thus, motorists with special plates would be cited for a traffic violation when they are caught plying the roads on days their regular license plates say they should not, Vergel de Dios said.

Box of groceries causes stir at bus station

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FALSE alarm.

An unattended package that disrupted operations at a bus terminal in Pasay City was not a bomb but a box of groceries, Pasay police said.

It was at 1:30 a.m. yesterday when a lady guard of Victory Liner found a box near the dispatcher's area and the comfort room, recounted chief security officer Benjie Sineneng.

Members of the Pasay special weapons and tactics team, who immediately responded to the site, found out that it was just a box of grocery items, he told the INQUIRER yesterday.

The box was later claimed by a passenger who was bound for Dagupan City, Pangasinan.

The incident caused no great panic among passengers, said Senior Inspector Aquilino Almanza of the city's police community precinct (PCP) 5.

"There were just a few passengers at that time," Almanza said, adding that passengers only began to flock to the bus terminal yesterday afternoon.

However, they are not taking any chances, he added.

The SWAT team, at present, is going around all bus terminals in Pasay City, including the Philtranco bus terminal in Edsa and the bus stations at the Pasay Rotunda.

Philtranco buses carry passengers headed for Bicol, while the buses at the Pasay Rotunda transport Cagayan-bound and Isabela-bound commuters.

Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency agents backed up by drug-sniffing dogs have also been making the rounds of bus stations in the city, Almanza said.

Special Action Force members have been detailed in all the bus terminals in the city, while barangay watchmen were kept on guard, he continued.

"So far, it is peaceful in our area," he said.

However, the police would continue to watch over the bus terminals as passengers return from vacation.

Meanwhile, at the Victory Liner bus terminal, security measures remained tight.

Baggage inspections and body searching by Pasay police and the terminal's security guards continued.

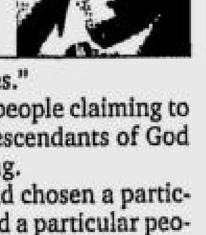
"We don't allow passengers who refuse the inspections to board our buses," said Sineneng.

Private cars have not been allowed into the terminal so that everybody would undergo bag inspection, he added.

God favors no religion or race

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



FR. ESTANISLAO Soria, a priest in the Archdiocese of Manila, now goes by the name of Muhammad Soria, having converted to Islam.

It's rare for a Catholic to be converted to Islam. Much rarer still—perhaps a million in one—does a Catholic priest renounce his faith and join Islam.

But it doesn't matter. God is God no matter what you call the Supreme Being.

Whether it be Allah, Yahweh, Bathala, Dios, it's still the same Deity we all worship.

God doesn't care what your religion is. He only cares for you.

There is no such thing as the "true religion" or such people as "the chosen ones."

Religions or people claiming to be the direct descendants of God are hallucinating.

For if God had chosen a particular religion and a particular people as his representatives on earth, why didn't He just create one single race?

Why did he create Chinese, Africans, Caucasians, and Asians?

It's high time religions taught their followers that there are other ways of worshipping God and those ways are not wrong, just different.

As different as the color of one's skin from another human being who comes from another continent.

I watched a movie where one of the characters asked another what his religion was.

The guy who was asked said he didn't have any religion because "religion divides people."

How true. Instead of uniting the human race, religion divides. Christians versus Muslims, Catholics versus Protestants, Sunni Muslims versus Shiite Muslims, Ang Dating Daan versus Iglesia ni Cristo.

In the name of God, millions of people have been killed. The Crusades that lasted centuries and that pitted Christians against the Muslims were launched in the name of God.

The early Catholic Church punished with death people it thought were non-believers or heretics.

But why is this so when we worship only one God?

God neither favors any religion nor any particular race.

We—Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, atheists—are all His creatures.

All of us come from Him.

Dentist gets back condo

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE COURT of Appeals has upheld the ownership of dentist Joseph Lim over an Ortigas condominium that was being claimed by officers of the dissolved Oral Implantology Center of the Philippines (OICP).

In an 11-page ruling, the appellate court's Special 16th Division upheld a Securities and Exchange Commision ruling which declared that Lim, former OICP president, and his wife Giok Leng Lim were the legitimate owners of the condominium unit at the Gold Loop Tower in Ortigas, Pasig City.

The tribunal also junked the OICP"s charge that Lim violated the Corporation Code when he acted as the group's president and treasurer at the same time in 1994.

"The claim of the petitioner that (Lim) committed misappropriation of the corporate assets, business and properties as well as the mortgage and encumbrance of Unit NE-31 of the Gold Loop Towers Condominium is unsubstantiated and terribly lacks documentary proof," said the decision penned by Justice Eloy Bello Jr.

METRO

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Text us your feedback: Inquirer met name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) *Editor* Ester G. Dipasupil ■ *Assistant Editor* Cenon B. Bibe Jr.

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MMDA wants extra week for pink fences

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A LITTLE more time.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) may need another week to further observe the effects of its experimental pink fence scheme on traffic-choked Edsa, according to MMDA Deputy Chair Cesar Lacuna.

"It is possible for us to extend by another week, because our third week fell on days when there was really not much traffic," Lacuna told the INQUIRER the other day.

Monitoring

The agency had set a three-week observation period for its pink fence scheme after it began installing the steel barriers early this month.

The move was meant to strictly limit inter-city buses on the two outer lanes of Edsa for picking up and dropping off passengers at yellow lanes the MMDA had established as bus lanes.

The first portion of the avenue to be fenced was Edsa's southbound portion in front of Camp Crame, where steel fences covered a distance of more than one kilometer, according to Lacuna.

The wait-and-see phase, he added, was meant to gauge whether or not the pink fences worked, by determining its effect on the traffic flow.

Fine tuning

After the observation period, the MMDA was set to fine-tune the scheme to make it work better.

The end of the observation period, however, fell on a Holy Week when the MMDA expected roads to have light traffic especially toward the weekend, said Lacuna.

Less traffic

"Naturally, there won't be too much traffic," said Lacuna, referring to major roads that would have fewer vehicles on the road since many motorists would be spending the Holy Week break at home or in rest and recreation spots.

Given such a traffic situation, a conclusive study on the pink fences may not be effectively made, the deputy chair said.

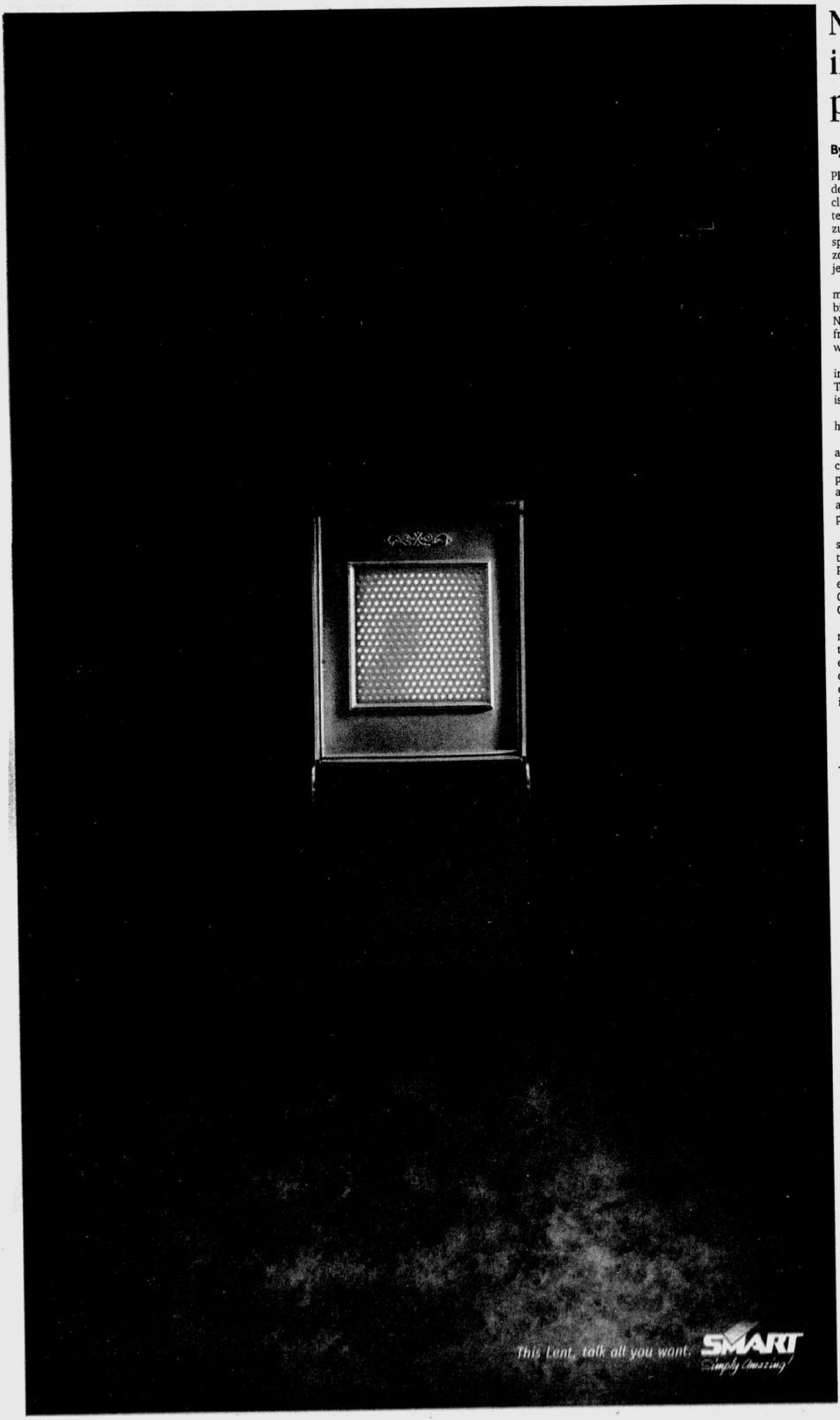
Thus, more time would be needed to see whether or not the steel barriers indeed made traffic along Edsa worse, a frequent complaint echoed by motorists.

"Just like any other changes —like the controversial U-turn slots or any geometric improvement—there would naturally be problems at the onset, and there would definitely be some period of adjustment," said Lacuna.

Best intentions

"But when motorists already get used to the idea, that's when they will see what our intentions were when we implemented this program.

"Our only interest was the safety and convenience of both motorists and pedestrians alike," he said.



No more delays in Northrail project—GMA

By Christine O. Avendano

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered housing and railways authorities to clear within three months the seven-kilometer railway line from Caloocan City to Valenzuela City of houses standing in the area to speed up the implementation of the North Luzon Railways Corporation (Northrail) project.

Ms Arroyo issued the directive at ceremonies marking the turnover of the responsibility of maintaining the 1.7 kilometer Northrail line cleared of informal settlers from the National Housing Authority to railway officials.

The cleared areas include four barangays in Malabon City: Barangays Acacia, Tugatog, Teneros and Potrero, according to a statement issued by Malacanang

Some 2,000 squatters from these barangays had already moved to relocation sites.

President Arroyo inspected the cleared area in Barangay Tugatog and thanked officials involved in the project, which aims to put up a new railway system that will eventually run the stretch between Metro Manila and the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga.

Accompanying the President during her inspection trip were Vice President Noli de Castro, NHA General Manager Federico Laxa, Philippine National Railways General Manager Jose Ma Sarasola II, Malabon City Mayor Canuto Oreta, and Northrail President Jose Cortes Jr.

Cortes said President Arroyo issued the directive to ensure that there would be no further delays in the project. He said heavy equipment to be used for the rail tracks were due to arrive this month, including four drilling machines, a compressor, and geodetic instruments.

Farming in city? Why not, say QC officials

By DJ Yap

NEED additional income in Quezon City?

How about farming?

Plans are underway to promote farming as an alternative source of livelihood in an urban setting.

The success of the demonstration farm in Sanctuario de San Vicente de Paul, Tandang Sora has encouraged Quezon City officials to introduce urban agriculture in the city, according to the local government's Urban Farming Office.

The garden recently yielded some P2,000 in gross income from the sales of the initial vegetable harvest from Jan. 8-30, said agricultural technologist Luz Tallada.

Vegetable crops including lettuce, eggplants, tomatoes, hot peppers, bitter melons and cauliflower have been planted in the garden that occupies an area of more than 1,000-square meters.

In her report to Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr., City Agricultural Officer Virginia Policarpio called the demo project a success, after yielding a net income of almost P1,000, from an initial capitalization of just over P3,000.

Tallada said the project was truly innovative since they had used recycled materials in tending the garden. Only one laborer looks after the garden, she added.

Belmonte expressed optimism about the future of the project.

In a statement, the mayor vowed to expand the city's urban farming program to include vacant lands in depressed areas to provide additional income to the community.

One of the areas being considered is the Payatas dump which the local government wants to convert into a model community.

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Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

GOLF: LPGA Safeway International; 6 p.m.; ESPN—It's down to the third round in Arizona. Asian Tour—TCL Classic; 10 a.m. (r); STAR Sports—Find out who takes control in the third round in China.

BASKETBALL: NBA—Mavs vs Kings; 11 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports—Dallas and Sacramento try to outrun and outgun each other once more.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Paquiao a bigger loser–to Murad

'He makes Don King look like a saint'

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

BEFORE losing by unanimous decision to Mexican Erik Morales last Sunday, Filipino ring idol Manny Pacquiao was already a bigger loser—and of all people—to his US promoter Murad Muhammad.

In an interview several days before the fight, Pacquiao's US trainer Freddie Roach had said Murad, contrary to common practice, will be receiving the pay-per-view (PPV) upside of 40 percent reserved for the GenSan fighter.

"Before Manny signed his last contract with Murad, Bob Arum called me up and he negotiated this deal with me: It's the exact same pay day we're making now: a guarantee, plus 40 percent of the upside (after the break even of the PPV money). The upside was going 100 percent to Manny. But now the upside is going to Murad Muhammad," Roach said.

Guarantee

Roach also told boxing writer Joe Rein in the same interview that the reigning Ring Magazine featherweight champion was to receive a guarantee of $1.75 million—the biggest ever purse for Pacquiao.

Now, just days after the monumental fight at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, the figures are slowly coming out of the woodwork, and they point to Murad getting $2.8 million from Pacquiao's PPV share and the Filipino getting nothing.

Estimates

Roach cited that based on local estimates, the Pacquiao-Morales fight should have snagged some 400,000 pay-per-view buys and at $44.95 per buy, the PPV should amount to $17.98 million.

Meanwhile, Pacquiao, who endured a deep cut over his right eye from a headbutt in the fifth round, was left with only $612,500 (P33,075,000) out of his purse after deducting the taxes and shares of the members of Pacquiao's team.

"Murad may have made more than Manny, for what, he didn't risk his life. That's horrible. This guy makes Don King look like a saint," Roach said.

Taken to task

Roach's assertions seemed to bolster an earlier report that Pacquiao had taken Muhammad to task after it was reported that while Morales was getting 40 percent of the PPV share and Bob Arum 20 percent, it was Muhammad who took the 40 percent which was supposed to go to Pacquiao.

"Well with Murad I think he is one of those guys who don't really care about the fighter more so than the money," Roach said yesterday in an interview.

Roach also rued Muhammad's seeming lack of support for his fighter, saying: "Like the trip to the hospital, myself and Shelley (Finkel) stayed for four hours, while Murad was counting his money in his suite."

Finkel, Pacquiao's new manager, Roach and Manny went to a hospital where doctors suggested a corrective plastic surgery to close the deep cut Pacquiao suffered in the fight.

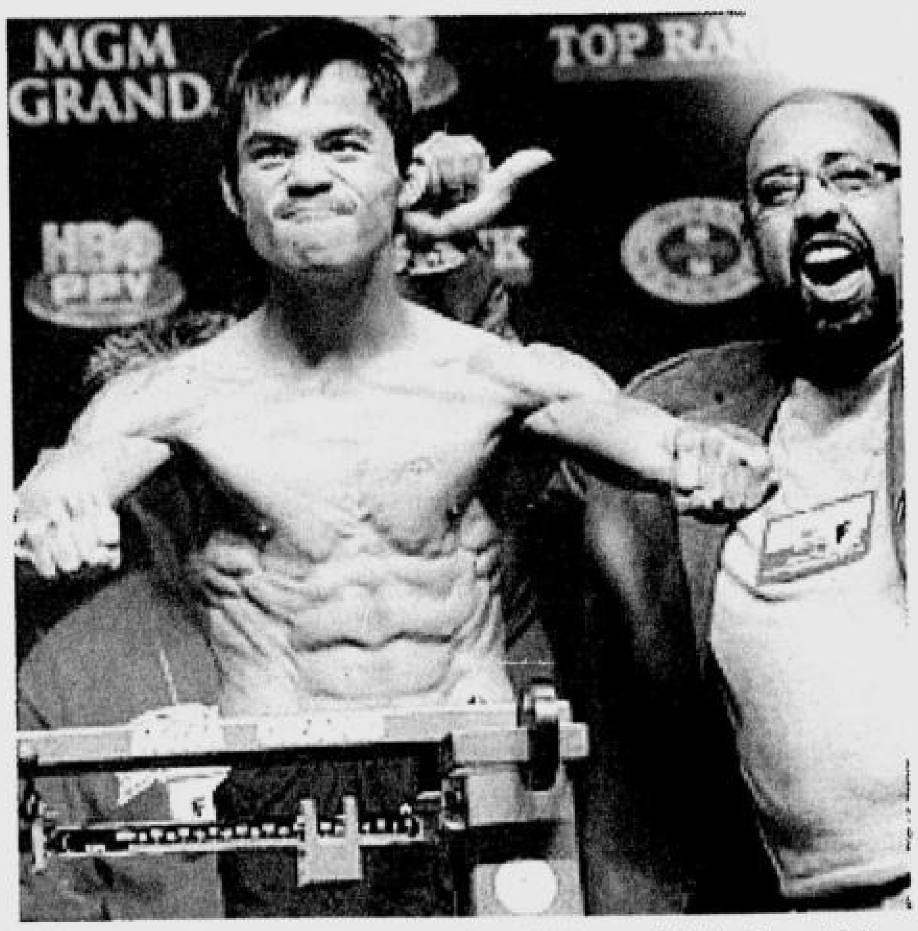
Roach revealed for the first time, however, that they have underestimated Erik Morales a bit and that the bleeding of Pacquiao's cut did not stop.

Rematch

"No complaints, we lost, he won and we are definitely looking at a rematch in September," he added.

He also assured fans that should a rematch be made, Pacquiao will definitely be wearing his favorite Reyes gloves.

Roach also pointed out that "there was a lot of noise during the Manny fight and it was difficult to get Manny to listen with all the loud speaking and these guys with no knowledge about Manny screaming instructions. All these guys (were) trying to do my job."



PACQUIAO exults with his US promoter Murad Muhammad during the weigh-in before his fight with Mexican Erik Morales Sunday.

FILIPINO tennis pros Eric Taino (center) and Cecil Mamiit (right) will be playing for the country in the SEAG this November. At left is junior ace Kyle Joshua Dandan.

ERIK ARAZAS

Mamiit, Taino to anchor RP SEAG net bid

By Musong R. Castillo

TWO US-born tennis players with legitimate world rankings will be living a dream by playing for the Philippines in the Southeast Asian Games this year.

The Philippine Tennis Association, in turn, has now started dreaming.

"Our goal is to win one or two gold medals (in the SEAG)," said Philta president Buddy Andrada yesterday. "But now that they are here, we are now looking at sweeping the men's event for four (gold medals)."

Andrada earlier presented Cecil Mamiit and Eric Taino as the new members of the national team in the biennial meet that unwraps in Manila and three other key cities in November.

Dream

"It's a dream to be here, playing for the country," said the 28-year-old Mamiit, who was born and raised in Los Angeles in the United States but traces his roots to Alaminos, Laguna and Sariaya, Quezon.

"Thanks for giving us the attention for wanting to do well for the Philippines," said Taino, a lefty who resides in Jersey City, New Jersey. "It will be an honor playing for my country."

The duo will also play for the Philippines in the Davis Cup in Lebanon in July if the Philta can secure the approval of the ITF regarding the players' change in citizenships on time.

Andrada disclosed that Mamiit and Taino already have Philippine passports, which came easy since both were born in the US when their parents were still Filipinos.

Mamiit and Taino, regular campaigners in the ATP Tour in the US, will finally be wearing the national colors after fulfilling prior commitments to the United States Tennis Association.

Mamiit backed up Andrada's optimism, especially with Thai superstar Paradorn Schrichipan likely to skip the SEAG in favor of the money-rich Tour.

Experience

"We've seen these Southeast Asian players in action and we have a lot of experience (playing) against them," Mamiit said. "And the biggest thing going for us right now is that we know how to prepare against these guys."

"We hope it carries over to the SEA Games."

The SEAG has cut down to four the gold medals in tennis—two each in the men and ladies' events. But there's a proposal to restore the men's and ladies' team events and the mixed doubles.

Mamiit and Taino will play singles and doubles, and if the new format is approved, will campaign in the team and mixed doubles events as well.

Andrada bared that the leading candidates to fill the two remaining slots in the men's team are Johnny Arcilla and PJ Tierro, while Czarina Mae Arevalo and Fil-German Anja Peters will most likely occupy the first two ladies' slots.

The Philta had pursued Mamiit a few years back for the Asian Games, but negotiations fell through due to the reported high prize demanded by the 5-foot-8 talent, who once beat the likes of Michael Chang and An-

MAMIIT/A19

MOTOLITE
Walang tirik, ngayong Holy Week.

MOTOLITE SAGIP TIRIK

Kung masiraan, magpasagip sa Motolite Sagip Tirik, March 23-27, 2005 at participating Motolite Battery stations: NORTHERN LUZON - Baguio City (Caltex Station) • La Union, before Baguio (Caltex Station) • Capas, Tarlac (Caltex Station) • Olongapo-Gapan Rd., San Fernando (Caltex Station) • Olongapo-Gapan Rd., Guagua (going to Bataan) SOUTHERN LUZON - Tagaytay City (Caltex Station) • Calamba, Laguna, Brgy. Halang (Caltex Station) • San Pablo, Laguna (Caltex Station)

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• Battery Liquid Check • Battery Terminal Post Cleaning • Battery Charging System Check • Battery 3-point Test • Battery Life Advice • Minor Engine Check • Battery Sales and Replacement

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Tigers dump Richards

By June Navarro

AFTER dropping three straight games, the Coca-Cola Tigers finally came to their senses and sent the inefficient Jaja Richards packing.

Bakari Hendrix, a 6-foot-8 inside operator, will replace the 6-foot-10 Richards in a bid to boost the campaign of the Tigers, who have only a win to show in four outings.

Coach Eric Altamirano said the 255-lb Hendrix is arriving tomorrow fresh from a stint in the Continental Basketball Association.

Hendrix, who played for the Yakima Sun Kings in the CBA, will join the Coca-Cola practice early next week and plunge into action when the Tigers meet the Shell Turbochargers on Wednesday (March 30).

After beating Sta. Lucia Realty during the opening of the 2005 Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference, the Tigers lost three in a row against sister teams San Miguel Beer, Purefoods and Barangay Ginebra.

Richards, who averaged 11 points and 11.3 rebounds in four games, wasn't a big factor against the Tigers' lone victory over the Realtors.

The Tigers are presently tied with the Alaska Aces at eighth place.

Voted 1997-98 West Coast Conference Player of the Year, the 27-year-old Hendrix was Gonzaga University's leading scorer, averaging 19.9 points in his final season.

Scouting reports showed that Hendrix, whose strongest offensive weapon is a deadly jump hook in the paint, also has a decent outside shooting from even beyond 15 feet.

Hendrix also played for Huntsville Flight in the 2002-2003 National Basketball Development League along with former PBA imports Art Long (San Miguel Beer) and Ron Riley (Alaska).

When Coca-Cola clashes with Talk 'N Text, Hendrix will go up against Noel Felix, his scoring partner for the Yakima Sun Kings, whom the Phone Pals signed up to replace Earl Ike.

RICHARDS: Early exit

REM ZAMORA

11th Dunlop Tennis Camp

FORMER Southeast Asian Games gold medalists Roland So, Jennifer Saret and DJ Suarez and national coaches Martin Misa, Totoy Alina and Cris Cuarto will lead the 11th Dunlop Tennis Camp scheduled from April to June all over Metro Manila and some parts of Luzon.

Lessons for beginners, advanced and intermediate players will be conducted by So, Misa, Cuarto and Art Cano at the Club Filipino Tennis Court and Johnson Park. Alina will be at the Alina Tennis Center in San Pablo City, Saret at Ateneo University and Suarez at South City Center in Biñan, Laguna.

Other instructors are Poli Hipolito (Collegio de San Agustin), Edwin Contado and Glenn Ebogon (Oakwood Premier), Dante Velena (Manila Diamond Hotel), Jun dela Cruz (Valle Verde I), Mac Biglete and Teng Flores (Valle Verde 6), Larry dela Cruz and Rodel Flores (San Lorenzo Village), Paskie Capito (Naval Base Command in Sangley Point), Roderick Ramirez and Willie Servillon (Orchard Golf and Country Club), Boyette Tutanes (Hillsborough), Sidney Mella (Valle Verde Country Club) and Alvin Dimaculangan (Lipa City).

Registration forms are available at the Dunlop Slazenger InternationalInc. office (893-2727) and at all camp sites.

Revolutionary concept

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE CONCEPT automatically becomes a revolutionary because it is a first in the Philippines.

I refer to the Pay-Per-View (PPV) system that hit Angeles City and other parts of Pampanga and the country during the classic Pacquiao-Morales fight last Sunday, March 20.

While most of Metro Manila had to labor through hours of television viewing before finally knowing the outcome of the bout, virtually all of Pampanga knew the result hours before the fight could be aired on regular TV showing over RPN 9 and Solar Sports.

The secret is the Pay-Per-View TV.

In contrast to the regular TV viewing of fights held abroad where they are shown to us on a "slightly delayed basis" but which is not really "slightly delayed" but very much delayed, the PPV gives us the fight on TV exactly the minute the fight starts from the arena of battle.

No advertisements.
No commercials.
No interruptions.
All boxing.
All action.
All results.

Very common in America for decades already, the PPV system has been introduced in the country by an enterprising businessman named Dennis Anthony Uy, a thirty-something from Angeles City.

"Not to brag but my system has also eliminated thievery commonly victimizing my fellow cable providers," said Dennis.

The thievery of cable lines, he said, is the handiwork of cable linesmen themselves.

"They collude with customers by assuring clients of free installation of the system for a fee, without the cable provider knowing about it," he said.

Dennis also said his system does away with splitters, which is the common practice among many households wherein one cable line is split into many lines within a house and hooked to several TV sets.

"Mine is able to monitor all cable lines in any house and it can detect splitters or multi-cable lines that rob cable providers a substantial amount of money every year," Dennis said.

Already in practice in Angeles City and many parts of Pampanga is a card similar to a cell phone card that can be obtained for only P99 and good for a one-month use of a cable hook up to Dennis' ACCTN.

During the annual conference in Cebu involving more than 1,000 or so cable providers in the country, Dennis Uy's system became an instant hit.

Already, orders of his system, which he calls the Total Addressable System—TAS for short—have been flooding the offices of Dennis.

In the recent Pacquiao-Morales fight alone, seven cities were able to obtain Dennis' TAS and served out the PPV to the thrill and satisfaction of their clients. They are, aside from Angeles and San Fernando in Pampanga, the cities of Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, Legaspi, and Taguig (The Fort), Daet in Camarines Norte and the province of Zambales.

Indeed, it will not be long when the entire country will start enjoying the excitement of PPV. Gone will be the days when we are painfully bombarded with commercials while watching our favorite Pacquiao do battle with the world's best boxers.

Here's a glass to Dennis Anthony Uy, whose creativity and inventiveness has made us proud again to be a Filipino.

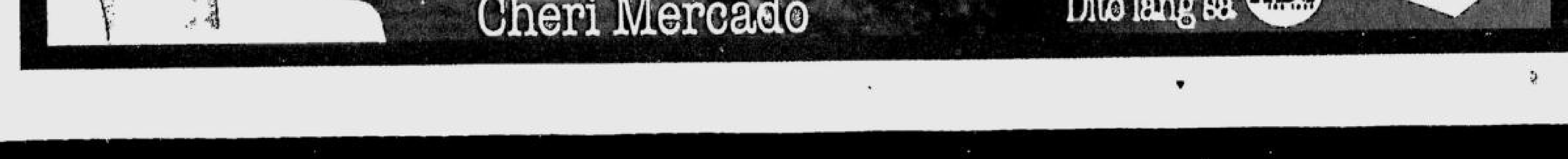
***

FASTBREAK. Rudy and Pampin Salud, Hermie Aquino, George Alcantara, Makati Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado, Shell coaches Leo Austria and Dayong Mendoza, P/Supt. Marietto Valerio, Lito Orillaza, Ricky and Aya Sadiwa, Hermie Rivera, Dennis Principe, Shell players Wesley Wilson, Adonis Sta. Maria and Ronald Tubid, Ed Picson and Sol Juvida were among many Manilans who were not only treated to a delightful PPV viewing of the Pacquiao-Morales fight last Sunday. Equally satisfying and unforgettable were typical Pampango dishes served to them by Secretary Ed Pamintuan and his very gracious, ever smiling wife, Minyang, at Spencer's Resto & Bar in Angeles City. For aperitif: *buro-buro hipon* with mustard, *ampalaya* and eggplant; *sitsaron tilapia* skin; *adobo* snipes; and, *chicharon bulaklak*. Minyang's *sisig* was a knockout. For lunch, spare ribs, roasted hito and *tilapia*, Spencer's Special Sisig and *kare-kare*. Food galore and a classic Pacquiao fight, live on Channel 67 of Dennis Anthony Uy's ACCTN, what more could you have asked for on a Sunday such as last Sunday? Bruce McTavish, my partner with Sonny Lopez in the pre-fight TV show of the Pacquiao bout, understood it only too well when I had to decline his invitation for a "nightcap" at his Four Seasons restaurant in the City of Angels. Promise, Bruce, I won't say no the next time you invite me again. Deal?

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday, March 24, 2005
SINO ANG BABANGGA SA GINEBRA?
PBA
ABC iba tayo
2005 PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE
ASTIG!
ClickTheCity.com
[illegible]

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4:25 PM)	Gatekeepers (5:10 PM)	Gundam Seed (5:35 PM)	The Road To Stardom	TV Patrol		Spirits	Krystala	Hiram	Save The Last Dance	'Til Death Do Us Part	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
NBN		Taiwan/Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision	Next Stop			Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Sinulog Festival					
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA			PBA		Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Inq TV	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Joyride	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Knock Out	Tyler Hungry Heart	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin		Full House	Stairway To Heaven	Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Wrestling		NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		Mosconi Cup					IBC News Tonite		
Solar		WWE Smackdown				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsteel	Avengers	Stargate SG1		Thunder Box		JAG		Revenge Of Shaolin Kid			
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC	Change of Heart	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Starting Over		Significant Others	Knock First	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Good Morning Miami	Committed	American Dreams		Queer Eye For The Straight Girl		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Big Men On Campus	
Cinema One		Magnifico				Divine Mercy Sa Buhay Ni Sister Faustina				Friends & Lovers				Dama And The Giants				Wala Na Bang Pag-ibig	
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Batman Beyond	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	America's Next Top Model			Miss Match		News Central	Oprah		Yes Dear
AXN		The Contender		Fear Factor		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Samurai X		Andromeda (Season III)		Cannon AXN Xtreme	Now See This	Lost		Jakob The Liar			
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol	Growing Up Gotti	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol	Growing Up Gotti	The Chronicle: News From The Edge		Outback Jack		Friends	American Idol
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	CNN Business Traveller	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Frontlines Of Construction		Explorations Powered By Duracell		Evolution		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr Brady Barr	Wow		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Frontlines Of Construction		Explorations Powered By Duracell	
Solar Sports		IBF China Super Grand Prix MD		GWS Ep.11-2005	Sounds of the Finals				Davis Cup '05 France vs Sweden 1st rd.				NBA TV Daily						NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds						
HBO	Wishmaster: The Prophecy Fulfilled			The Truth About Charlie				Deadly Visions			Child's Play 2 (7:35 PM)			Intolerable Cruelty			Knockaround Guys		
Star Movies			Tornado Warning (3:45 PM)			Arachnophobia (5:15 PM)				Unshackled (7:10 PM)				Murder Of Crows				Shark Attack 3: Megalodon	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Static Shock	Gundam Wing	Shaman King	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Dexter's Laboratory	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	The Superfriends	Samurai Jack
ESPN				World Pool Trick Shot Masters '04				LPGA Golf Safeway Int'l Presented by Coca-Cola				Sportscenter Asia	2004 Int'l Chall of Champs Unc. CT USA		Pro Billiards '04 Trick Shot Magic NV, USA		2004 Women's Tournament of Champions		Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	Recess: Taking The 5th Grade			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	School Of Life	
Cinemax				Meeting Venus				The Cradle Will Fall			Darkman 3			D.C. Sniper: 23 Days Of Fear			Murder At 1600		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Defending Our Kids: The Julie Posey Story				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Judging Amy		Strong Medicine		Magic Of Ordinary Days			Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye (10:35PM)		Judging Amy (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Extreme Engineering		Ultimate Cars	Building The Ultimate	Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Power Zone	
MTV Philippines			MTV Hanging Out		MTV Most Wanted		TRL		Handpicked: Mojofly	MTV Dyes		Battle of Ozzfest	One Bad Trip	Wildboyz	Cribs	MTV U-Break	MTV Urban Beats	VH1 Video Collections	
Sports Plus	Italia Serie A highlight 8		You've Got to See This	NCAA rd.2				Raceworld		Golf Int'l.	Italia Serie A				You've Got to See This	Nascar Golden Corral 500 Atlanta			
EWTN	A Christian Pilgrimage To Jordan	Angelus (3:15PM)	Suffering Church	Angel Force	Children's Rosary	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	The Spirit Of Catholic Leadership	Saints: A Closer Look	EWTN Gallery	EWTN Live With Father Mitch Pacwa		Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Council Of Faith	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Holy Spirit In The Church	The Journey Home	

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
TUWING HUWEBES pagkatapos ng American Idol
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Cory suggests telethon to boost Games' budget

By Jasmine W. Payo

GUESS who "donated" her two cents worth to the country's bid to raise over a billion pesos for the Southeast Asian Games.

Former President Cory Aquino suggested to her brother, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, a telethon in May to help the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee reach its target of P1.2 billion to bankroll the biennial meet.

This was revealed yesterday by a member of the Philsoc marketing arm, who added that the group is seriously considering the suggestion, even to the point of mapping out strategic plans as to how to go about it.

The marketing group is eyeing a month-long campaign aired over NBN-4, RPN-9 and IBC-13, the three main broadcast outfits that will air the Games. A two-hour telecast featuring the country's top athletes will be used to kick off the nationwide pledging activity.

But the telethon—which aims to reach the untapped public market—is just one of the activities the Philsoc has lined up in an attempt to meet the target budget.

"All the activities will go full blast in April," said Boy Santiago, Philsoc marketing consultant.

"We're just finalizing the details in all our run-up activities," added Pete Cura, Philsoc marketing committee head. "We're deep in discussion with the sponsors."

During the telethon, athletes will seek donations and personally take the calls of the viewers. Interested parties may then send contributions through dedicated landlines.

The live program will run from 10 p.m. onwards and will also feature entertainment numbers and segments on the national athletes' preparations for the Games.

Aquino is no stranger to the Games. It was under her term that the country last hosted the biennial meet in 1991.

The Philsoc marketing committee announced it has achieved half of its target of P640 million from the government and private sponsors during the official marketing launch on March 15.

Other marketing activities lined up are the caravans and mall tours in key cities in Metro Manila, Cebu and Bacolod.

"Since the Games will be multi-venue, we want to create maximum awareness," said Cura.

Text-based promotions will also be launched in two weeks.

"We're having a nationwide contest for people to come up with the Games' slogan and a name for the Philippine eagle, our official mascot," said Santiago. "We will announce the details soon."

AQUINO PDI PHOTO

Jins seek overall title

Attempt a SEAG record haul of eight gold medals

MARY Antoinette Rivero leads the RP team. PDI PHOTO

By Marc Anthony Reyes

BEATEN by a silver the last time around, the Philippine taekwondo team hopes to surpass the 1991 haul of eight gold medals and win the sport's overall crown in the coming Southeast Asian Games.

This was the target bared by national training director and Olympic bronze medalist Stephen Fernandez yesterday.

Tough foreign trips in Spain and Korea are lined up for the crack national team, which narrowly missed the overall title to Vietnam during the 2003 SEA Games when the host edged the Filipinos with just a single silver medal after winning five golds apiece.

Fernandez said the tune-up starts next month when 10 members of the national squad, including Olympians Thsomlee Go and Mary Antoinette Rivero, fly to Spain for the World Championships.

Also in the lineup were Dax Morfe, Carlos Padilla, JR Rivero, Ernesto Mendoza, Alex Briones, Eunice Alora, Aphrodite Brillantes and Lorraine Catalan.

They will next visit Korea for a month-long training and boot camp, which culminate with their participation in the prestigious Korean Open.

"We are working on that (overall championship)," said Fernandez. "But we are confident we can achieve it because we have the right mix of veterans and newcomers, plus the fact that the SEA Games will be held here."

The country has dominated the taekwondo competitions from 1991 in Manila until the 2001 in Kuala Lumpur. In the Manila edition, the RP jins took away half of the 16 gold medals at stake.

Taekwondo, which will be held in Cebu City, is one of the sports disciplines where the country is expected to put up a big fight, aside from track and field, boxing, wushu and basketball.

Meanwhile, the national badminton team lost all but one match in its tune-up duel with former world-ranked Indonesian players recently, but this doesn't faze national head coach Martin Araneta.

"I think it's a reality check on our part," Araneta told the INQUIRER during the break-in matches held last week. "We realized that we still have a lot to work on in terms of improving our game."

Only Lloyd Escoses managed to squeeze out a victory in the men's singles, while the SEAG bronze-winning team of siblings Kennie and Kennievic Asuncion, and Kennie and Paulo Obañana split their matches in the mixed doubles.

Araneta said the 16-man team will formally start its training March 29 with a rigid all-week program at the Clubsixfifty and the Philsports.

The chances for a SEA Games gold, according to the 34-year-old coach, remain slim as the SEAG Federation scrapped the team event, leaving nationals to struggle against world-class Indonesians and Malaysians in the men's and women's singles, men's and women's doubles and mixed doubles.

SPORTSWATCH

ISM bet wins boys' 16-under title

INTERNATIONAL School Manila bet Joshua Tan Ho outclassed Russell Arcilla Jr., 6-1, 6-3, yesterday to pocket the boys' 16-under title in the Gov. Muslim Wahab Akbar Age Group Tennis Championships at the PCA outdoor courts. In other matches, Akio Hari Ong Sy survived Kim Ivor Saraza, 7-6 (3), 6-4, for the 14-under title, Jose Lorenzo Ferrer prevailed over Tim Polero, 7-5, 6-3, for the 12-under title and Cebuano Jacob Lagman outplayed Pocholo Macalino, 7-5, 7-5, for the unisex 10-under crown.

Misamis Oriental golf slated

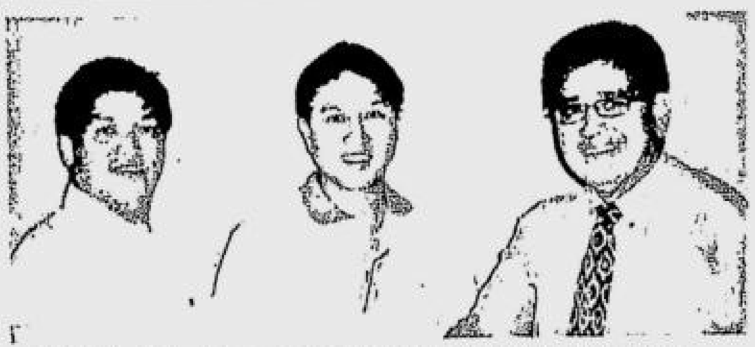
THE PROVINCIAL Government of Misamis Oriental in cooperation with San Miguel Corp. and Innove Communications holds the first Misamis Oriental Golf Tournament on April 2-3, 2005 at Pueblo de Oro Golf and Country Club as part of its yearlong Diamond Jubilee celebration. Golf enthusiasts from both the government and the private sector are expected to grace this tournament. Prizes up for grabs include a Ford Lynx sedan for the hole-in-one prize and over P250,000 worth of raffle prizes. Gov. Oscar S. Moreno will be opening the tournament with a ceremonial tee-off at 6:30 a.m. on April 2.

Go named Asean chess VP

NATIONAL Chess Federation of the Philippines president Go Teng Kok was installed unanimously as vice president of the Asean Chess Federation, a member of the world governing body of chess, Fide. ACC president Ignatius Leong, who is based in Malaysia, informed Go of the Filipino's new designation in the organization, which oversees the development of the sport in the region. The announcement also supplements the upbeat mood of chess in the country after the discipline was endorsed for regular membership to the Philippine Olympic Committee.

CSB, Miriam, St. Scho WNCAA champs

COLLEGE of St. Benilde, Miriam College and St. Scholastica's College have emerged as overall champions in their respective divisions of the WNCAA 35th season. Seniors champion CSB outscored Rizal Technological University and basketball and volleyball champion Lyceum of the Philippines with victories in athletics, tennis and swimming. Juniors winner Miriam was the winningest among the three division champions. St. Scho bagged the midgets overall trophy over Miriam and DLSZ. The WNCAA 35th season was presented by Kotex and sponsored by adidas, the Philippine Star, RPN 9, Monster Radio RX 93.1, Pantene and Café Lupe, in cooperation with Cadbury, Goldilocks, Molten, Mikasa, Citibank and Discovery Spa.



ILOILO Basketball League president Robery Uy (center), NBC secretaray general Tito Palma (left) and NBC chair Louie Kierulf put their hands together after finalizing the Iloilo Warriors' participation in the regional cagefest.

Mamiit, Taino...

From page A17

dre Agassi and has a runner-up finish in the ATP Tour.

Andrada swore that there were no negotiations of that sort when the Philta finally succeeded in getting the approval of the two to join the RP squad.

Instead, the long-time tennis head said that a total of $100,000 (roughly P5.5 million) is being earmarked by the association for the preparation and training of both teams.

Mamiit and Taino are given $50 hotel allowance and a per diem of $30 every time they play in a tournament. Their regular schedule in the ATP Tour is at least 32 weeks on the road.

Meanwhile, Kyle Joshua Dandan was invited to join the ITF International 16-under Junior Touring Team to play in several ETA events in Europe in June and July.

Dandan was also present during the presentation.

Abap sets youth tilt

THE AMATEUR Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) holds the National Youth and Women's Amateur Boxing Championships this May in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

The annual event, which Abap President Manuel T. Lopez said will also serve as an audition for new talents, will be held May 14 to 22.

Up for grabs are titles in four youth categories—kids (11 weight divisions), school boys (16), cadet (13), and junior (12)—as well as 13 weight classes in female category for boxers over 17 years but under 34.

Entries to the tourney are now being accepted at the Abap office at the administration building of the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex. For more details, call 5223437 or the Puerto Princesa secretariat, headed by city councilor Roger Castro at (048) 4347086 and 3828 and 09188684377.

Warriors eye strong NBC finish this time

THE ILOILO Warriors have promised to come back with a vengeance in the second season of the National Basketball Conference (NBC) which starts on April 16.

"We started strong but faded going into the homestretch [last year]," said Iloilo Basketball League president Robert Uy. "We'd rather have a slow start but a strong finish this time."

The Warriors, who roared to a 5-1 start last year, lost to the Ozamiz Cotta in the second round of the southern division.

Uy revealed that Iloilo will put up an all-Ilonggo team. Old reliables Eduardo Allado Jr., Elben Leonida and NBC's scoring leader, Carlos Savon Jr., will spearhead the Warriors.

Iloilo will hold a tryout on March 28 at the Iloilo Sports Complex with coach John Trumpets supervising the event. Interested players may contact IBL director Bayani Ladrido at 0917-3025990 and Snook Divinagracia at 0917-7919687.

Trumpets is being groomed to replace Roy Deles, a former PBA player who migrated to the United States after last season's playoffs.

ESPN signs contract with Augusta Masters

THE AUGUSTA Masters, one of golf's four majors, hopes to further nurture its appeal to the Asian fan base, signing an exclusive television contract with cable giant ESPN STAR Sports for this year's staging.

The cable channel has also bagged the broadcast rights for the US Open.

ESPN STAR promises a comprehensive coverage of the US Masters, which could be the venue for what is shaping up to be a battle royale for the No. 1 spot among current holder Vijay Singh, Tiger Woods, Ernie Els and Phil Mickelson.

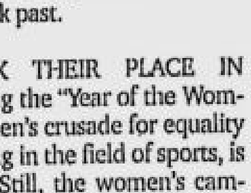
Archived footage from some of the highlight moments of the tournament will also be shown.

ESPN STAR is hoping to bank on the rise of popularity of the sport in the region.

More importantly, Asia has experienced a boom of talents lately, with several players making their mark in the big PGA tournaments. The cable channel's coverage of the Masters will begin April 7 -10.

Murad should repent for his 'sins' against Pacquiao

CLEAN LIVING



Manolo R. Iñigo

ONE compelling reason why I sort of walked away from pro boxing is because of the presence of glib-tongued and cunning promoters like Murad Muhammad, the new Jersey-based wheeler-dealer who promotes Manny Pacquiao's most recent fights.

In my view, Pacquiao lost to Mexico's Erik Morales by a 12-round unanimous decision in Las Vegas last Sunday because of the backstage machinations (subtle double-cross?) of Murad Muhammad.

First, why did Muhammad allow Morales to use the gloves of his choice (Winning) and not what Pacquiao has been using (Reyes) ever since he launched his successful career in the United States in 2001? Why didn't Muhammad insist on the type of gloves which Pacquiao has been familiar with if he was truly protecting the interest of the Filipino fighter?

Pacquiao said he used that different brand of gloves because Murad had signed a contract (with fight organizers Bob Arum of Top Rank), agreeing with what Morales liked which did not sit well with Pacquiao's famous American trainer Freddie Roach.

"Murad (Muhammad) signed the deal without asking anybody from our camp," said Roach, who several months ago had a falling-out with Muhammad, accusing the glib-tongued promoter of financial fraud, saying he was cheated of $25,000 when Pacquiao stopped Marco Antonio Barrera, also of Mexico, in November 2003.

Yesterday, Pacquiao also claimed he was shortchanged by Muhammad from his share of the pay-per-view TV proceeds, saying Muhammad earned more than $2 million without doing nothing while he risked life and limb fighting atop the ring.

Last December, Muhammad also promoted at The Fort in Taguig a virtual rip-off of a fight, a million-peso card which pitted Fahsan 3K Battery, an undistinguished boxer from Thailand, against battle-tested Pacquiao. As expected, Pacquiao stopped Fahsan in just four rounds even though the Thai was billed by Muhammad and some media members who are apologists for boxing as 'The Filipino Destroyer."

Murad Muhammad? There will always be too many of his kind, cunning promoters who continue to thrive in professional boxing in spite of a dark past.

***

WOMEN SEEK THEIR PLACE IN SPORTS. This being the "Year of the Woman," I say the women's crusade for equality with men, including in the field of sports, is making progress. Still, the women's campaign for parity with men is not fully won.

In the Olympics, for example, male athletes still dominate the Olympic events, 2-to-1. And while it is true that more events and more female athletes are now being allowed to compete and more events for women have been added to the Olympic calendar, the facts are incontrovertible: There is gender discrimination in the Games.

To illustrate. There are less than a dozen female members in the International Olympic Committee compared with more than 100 male members. The IOC has even ignored sanctions against member-countries that discriminate against women unlike its action against South Africa which it banned for 20 years because of apartheid. Why?

Whatever happened to the much publicized IOC plan to give a bigger role for women leaders in sports?

Nonetheless, compared with the past, the women of today are many times luckier.

In the ancient Olympics, female athletes were not allowed to take part.

As a matter of fact, there were no women competitors when the modern Games were revived in Athens in 1896. It was only in 1900 in Paris where 11 women were permitted to compete. The number of women participants has increased since then.

For the first time, too, money—brought about by "open" competitions—poured into the pockets of female athletes. A case in point is the US women's basketball team, whose members received $50,000 each during a 10-month tour while preparing for the Olympic Games.

And NBC, the American television network which covers the Olympics, persuaded the IOC to adjust its schedule of events to enable women viewers to watch on prime time more of the sports they like. According to their survey, women viewers prefer to watch gymnastics and swimming, more than anything, ahead of male-oriented sports like boxing and basketball, along with wrestling, weightlifting and any other sports that feature too much grunting, sweating and violence.

Rockets freeze Heat; Cavs destroy Pistons

HOUSTON—Tracy McGrady scored 26 points and the Houston Rockets registered a big victory Tuesday, putting a halt to the Miami Heat's scorching 12-game winning streak with an 84-82 thriller.

David Wesley scored 14 points, Yao Ming and seldom-used forward Clarence Weatherspoon added 12 and aging center Dikembe Mutombo gave the Rockets a lift off the bench to keep the NBA's top-scoring twosome of Shaquille O'Neal and Dwyane Wade in check.

McGrady, who scored a total of 37 points and shot just 27 percent in the previous two games, struggled again to find his shot, going 8-of-27, but made all the clutch plays down the stretch.

O'Neal led Miami with 23 points and 16 rebounds, getting the best of his personal rivalry with Yao. Wade added 20 on just 4-of-19 shooting.

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 29 and got some sorely needed help from the Cavaliers bench to give interim coach Brendan Malone a win in his first game, 91-76, over the Detroit Pistons.

"We played great tonight," Malone said. "Our defensive intensity was great against one of the best teams in the NBA."

Malone took over after Paul Silas was fired Monday.

He gave more playing time to Anderson Varejao and other reserves and it paid off. Varejao scored 11 and played tough defense with a couple blocks that ignited Cleveland.

The win ended a three-game losing streak for the Cavaliers and snapped the Pistons' five-game winning streak.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Vince Carter scored 33 points to give the Nets a 98-91 victory win over the Indiana Pacers and its longest winning streak of the season.

Rookie center Nenad Krstic scored seven of his 15 points during a 14-2 run that put the Nets in control midway through the final period, as New Jersey won its fifth straight game.

Carter and Travis Best provided enough offense the rest of the way to give New Jersey a sweep of their back-to-back set against the Pacers.

The Nets gained a game on Indiana, which began the night in seventh place in the East, and moved within one game of Philadelphia for eighth place. With 14 games remaining, the Nets' playoff hopes are very much alive.

In Atlanta, Amare Stoudemire had 40 points and 13 rebounds to help the Phoenix Suns dump the Hawks, 105-94, and become the ninth NBA team to win 50 games following a 50-loss season.

With Stoudemire controlling the lane and Steve Nash handing out 11 assists, the Suns improved the league's best road record to 27-7 with an eighth straight victory outside Phoenix. They have won three of four overall.

Shawn Marion had 21 points and 11 rebounds for the Suns, who can tie the franchise record Wednesday night in Charlotte for consecutive road wins, a mark set in 1997-98 and matched the next season.

The Hawks, who were led by Al Harrington's 16 points, fell to an NBA-worst 8-25 at home.

In Salt Lake City, Mehmet Okur had 27 points and 16 rebounds and the Utah Jazz handed the Los Angeles Lakers their sixth straight loss, 115-107, despite 43 points from Kobe Bryant.

The Jazz stopped a season-long nine-game losing streak and won the season series against the Lakers for the first time since 1999, taking three of four games.

Bryant made nine of 15 triples, but missed all four of his 3-pointers in the fourth while scoring just four points.

Los Angeles, which fell 4 1/2 games behind Denver for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference, continued its longest losing streak since 1993-94—the last time the Lakers missed the playoffs.

In Denver, DerMarr Johnson had 20 points, Eduardo Najera added 16 and the Nuggets ran over its fourth straight opponent, crushing Washington, 127-98.

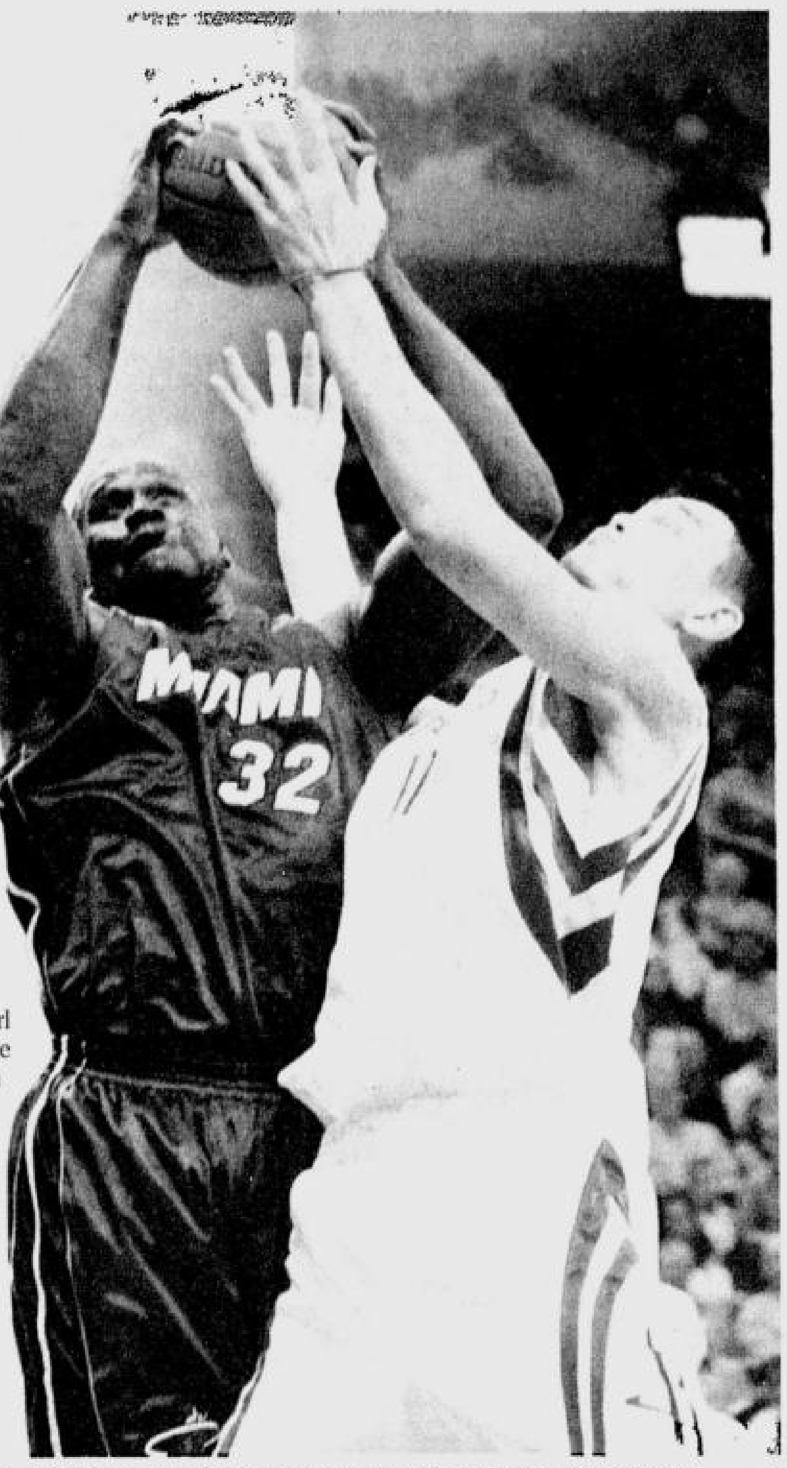
The Nuggets have been the NBA's hottest team since the All-Star break and gave the Wizards a glimpse of why at both ends. Denver had six players in double figures, shot 55 percent, had 37 assists, scored 30 points on the break and forced 20 turnovers.

The Nuggets are 19-5 since coach George Karl took over and have won 12 of 13 to move three games ahead of Minnesota for the final Western Conference playoff spot. Denver is just two games behind Memphis for seventh place.

Gilbert Arenas led the Wizards with 25 points, but didn't get much help.

In Seattle, Rashard Lewis scored 29 points and Luke Ridnour added a career-high 21 to lead the SuperSonics over the Milwaukee Bucks, 92-84.

In Sacramento, California, Kenny Thomas had 24 points and nine rebounds in his best game with the Kings, and coach Rick Adelman got his 700th career victory, 112-93, against his former team, the Portland Trail Blazers. *AP*



SHAQUILLE O'Neal dominated Yao Ming, but the Heat still lost. AP

Bonds out, midseason return eyed

NEW YORK—Barry Bonds might not resume his pursuit of Hank Aaron's home run record this season.

Joe Borowski broke his arm and will miss at least six weeks for the Chicago Cubs.

Bonds returned to the San Francisco Giants' spring training camp at Scottsdale, Arizona, on Tuesday after having a second knee operation and said he was physically and mentally "done," and blamed the media for at least part of his troubles.

"I'm tired of my kids crying. You wanted me to jump off a bridge, I finally did," Bonds said. "You finally brought me and my family down. So now go pick a different person."

Bonds, whose 703 career homers are 11 short of Babe Ruth's total and 52 behind Aaron's, had arthroscopic surgery on his right knee last week.

Bonds said he was tired and disappointed following a winter in which he was accused of steroid use, his grand jury testimony was leaked and he had two knee operations.

Leaning his head on a crutch and repeatedly saying he was tired, Bonds spoke after a 1 1/2-hour session with Giants trainer Stan Conte.

"Right now, I'm just going to try to rehab myself to get back to, I don't know, hopefully next season, hopefully the middle of the season," Bonds said. "I don't know. Right now I'm just going to take things slow."

After Bonds' first operation this winter, Conte had said Bonds was expected to be sidelined for six weeks. All the trainer would say after the second surgery was that Bonds was unlikely to be ready for the season opener.

At Mesa, Arizona, Cubs closer Borowski was hit by a line drive in a game Monday. His loss is another blow to Chicago's pitching staff already depleted by injuries to Kerry Wood and Mark Prior.

Borowski is wearing a splint and will begin a throwing program when the healing process is complete, approximately six weeks. *AP*

Tour honors Wimbledon champs

MIAMI—Wimbledon champions Roger Federer and Maria Sharapova were three-time winners at the inaugural Pro Tennis Choice Awards on Tuesday night.

Coming off a year in which he won three Grand Slam events and 11 singles titles, Federer was the easy choice for the ATP's Player of the Year. He was also voted the Fans' Favorite Award by ATPtennis.com users and was named the Stefan Edberg Sportsman of the Year.

Sharapova won WTA Tour Player of the Year after winning her first Grand Slam event at Wimbledon and claiming four titles. The 17-year-old Russian also received the Most Improved Player award and the Fans' Favorite award.

Also in the joint ATP and WTA Tour ceremony, Andy Roddick received the Arthur Ashe Humanitarian of the Year Award; Serena Williams and Tommy Haas were the Comeback Players of the Year. The ATP's Most Improved award went to Joachim Johansson, and Tatiana Golovin and Florian Mayer were named Newcomers of the Year.

Meanwhile, Serena Williams talked about a lot of things in a press conference about the NASDAQ-100 Open.

But when the subject switched to Sharapova, the conversation stalled. Williams claimed she only vaguely remembered the first time she played Sharapova—at Key Biscayne last year.

"I don't think you realize, I have a fashion company," Williams said. "I'm working on a really intense line for the fall. I'm an actress. I'm working on an animation series, on different reality series. I'm working on so much stuff."

With a giggle she added, "I don't really think about other people, because I have to focus on me. I don't think about Sharapova or anyone else on the tour. I don't have time."

Potential obstacles for Williams at Key Biscayne will be Sharapova, five other Russians seeded in the top 10 and two Belgians—Kim Clijsters, who won at Indian Wells last week, and Justine Henin-Hardenne, who has recovered from viral and knee ailments and is scheduled to play in her first tournament since the US Open. Amelie Mauresmo is seeded No. 1.

The men's field includes top-ranked Federer and defending champion Roddick. The only top players absent in either draw are No. 1-ranked Lindsay Davenport, curtailing her schedule due to her history of knee trouble, and No. 2 Lleyton Hewitt, sidelined with sore toes. *AP*

SHARAPOVA: Player of the year, most improved and fan favorite. AFP

Bowe Salt Lake fight postponed

SALT LAKE CITY—Riddick Bowe's bout scheduled for Friday night was postponed indefinitely because of contract and scheduling problems.

Bowe, the former heavyweight champion, had been scheduled to fight in the first boxing event held at the Delta Center, but the state boxing commission, Lion Heart Boxing Productions and arena officials announced Tuesday night that it was postponed.

No new date had been determined and it was not clear whether Bowe would actually fight in the "Night of the Heavies" when it happens.

"In the end, there were too many scheduling conflicts and contractual differences to pull off this event this week," Delta Center vice president of events Brent Allenbach said.

Edward Mendy of Lion Heart Boxing said Tuesday afternoon that details including the contract and who Bowe would fight were still being worked out.

Bowe, 38, started his comeback in September with a second-round knockout of Marcus Rhode in Bowe's first fight since 1996. Bowe (41-1, 33 knockouts) dropped out of a match in November because of an injury.

Bowe won the undisputed heavyweight championship by beating Evander Holyfield in 1992, but lost the title to Holyfield the following year.

Bowe also served 17 months in prison for kidnapping his first wife and their children in 1998. *AP*

'Big Four' headline golf cast

TORONTO—The Players' Championship, widely regarded as golf's unofficial fifth major, has attracted the world's top 50 players to the TPC at Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida this week.

Leading the title contenders in Thursday's first round on one of the world's most demanding courses will be the "Big Four" of Vijay Singh, Tiger Woods, Ernie Els and Phil Mickelson, all with wins in the bag this season.

"This is our (the players') championship," said Woods, who won the title in 2001. "People call it the fifth major and it takes that kind of mentality and that kind of perseverance to win on the TPC at Sawgrass.

"It's a great tournament, probably one of the strongest fields we'll have all year.

"You play against the best players on this golf course under these type of conditions. This is one heck of a test."

If an $8 million purse was not enough to stoke competitive fires, the No. 1 world ranking could change hands for the third time this season, adding even more spice to the week.

Separated by fractions in the rankings, No. 2 Woods and No. 3 Els could leave on Sunday with the top spot that Singh reclaimed with a second-place finish at last week's Bay Hill Invitational.

Despite the presence of the "Big Four," there are plenty of other players who will hope to challenge this week.

South African Retief Goosen, often overlooked by the fans but never by his fellow golfers, ranks high among the contenders.

Defending champion Adam Scott of Australia also has his supporters, while Irishman Padraig Harrington, runner-up at Sawgrass for the last two years and winner of the Honda Classic two weeks ago, will be in confident mood.

Scott, though, may be facing the longest odds as no player in the 30-year history of the event has ever successfully defended the title.

"It's coincidence, that's all," said Scott. *AP*

Pat scales college coaching summit

KNOXVILLE, Tennessee—Pat Summitt stands alone at the top of US college basketball.

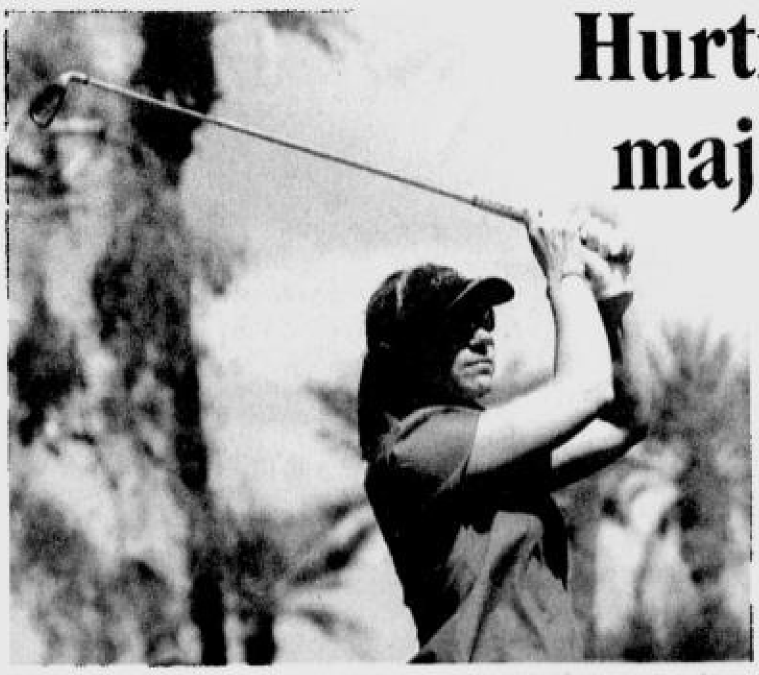
The Tennessee coach broke Dean Smith's career victory record Tuesday night, getting No. 880 in the Lady Vols' 75-54 win over Purdue in the second round of the National Collegiate Athletic Association women's college basketball championship tournament.

Summitt tied Smith at 879 with an easy win over Western Carolina in the first round Sunday night and passed the former North Carolina men's coach with another convincing victory. Summitt improved to 880-171, while Smith was 879-254 when he retired in 1997 after 36 years with the Tar Heels.

"Obviously, to be in the company with Coach Smith, to think about all the people that were a part of these wins, I never thought I'd live this long," Summitt said.

Top-seeded Tennessee (28-4), seeking its seventh national title under Summitt, advanced to face fourth-seeded Texas Tech in the semifinals of the Philadelphia Regional on Sunday.

At 52, Summitt's record could stretch well past 1,000 before she retires. *AP*



ANNIKA Sorenstam hits a second shot on the third hole during the Pro-Am of the Kraft Nabisco Championship. AFP

Hurting back gives Park major second thoughts

MISSION HILLS, California—South Korea's Grace Park has until Wednesday to decide if her back injury has healed enough for her to defend the first major of the season, the Kraft Nabisco Championship.

The 26-year-old has not been able to hit a shot since Saturday's third round of the Safeway International in Phoenix and if she cannot make her early tee-time for the Pro-am she will be forced to pull out of Thursday's first round.

"It's getting better all the time and I'm very hopeful that I'll be able to make it," the world No. 2, who underwent acupuncture treatment before playing last week, told reporters on Tuesday.

"I've had hours of physiotherapy since Sunday but I'm still in pain. I haven't hit a shot since Saturday and if the tournament had been today then I wouldn't have been able to play," she added.

Meanwhile, 15-year-old Michelle Wie hopes to improve on her fourth-place finish in this event 12 months ago.

"My goal is to hopefully finish higher than last year," said Wie, who is playing in her third LPGA event of the season. *Reuters*

Summer workshops with the pros

ENROLLMENT for the annual Trumpets Playshop is now ongoing.

Playshop is the summer activity of choice for enthusiasts who seek professional level training in theater, voice, and dance, as well as in personality development and media-related fields. The courses are open to all ages.

Resident talent managers are David Cosico, Carlo Orosa and Audie Gemora, who is also Playshop director.

Now on its 12th year, Playshop has a roster of successful former trainees that includes Christian Bautista, the bands AKAfellas and 17:28, Bettinna Carlos, Ailyn Luna, Cathy Bordalba, Cyril Alcazar, Sam Concepcion, Cheska Ortega, Marco Mañalac, Christine Dolendo, and Nicole Yulo.

Venues for the workshops are the Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Steps Dance Studio and Alabang Town Center. Classes run from April 4 to June 5. For enrollment details, call 6362842.

STARDEV Studios in Makati City offers comprehensive music and visual arts programs for summer. Photo shows Stardev teacher Nikki Junia, a cum laude in music education, coaching a student. For inquiries, call 8454353.

In Tagaytay

The Tagaytay Film Broadcast and Creative Workshops are set on April 25 to 29, and May 9 to 13 at the Development Academy of the Philippines.

Instructors and speakers include: Salvii Casino, Nick Tayag, Chi-Chi Robles, Joey Tanedo, Noli Garalde, Alex Baluyot, Lynet Villariba, Ray Junia, Ding Gagelonia, Danny dela Cuesta, Eddie Romero, Joel Lamangan, Roy Iglesias, Cesar Hernando, Boy Yniguez, Sonny Joaquin, Giggi Garcia, Ed Usman and Tato Malay. Call 9261883 for details.

Pinoy movie marathon on Ch 2

ABS-CBN airs a marathon of Filipino films afternoons starting today till Saturday. Screenings start right after "Wowowee."

Showing today: "Kahit Isang Saglit," with Judy Ann Santos and Piolo Pascual; "Bata Bata Paano Ka Ginawa," starring Vilma Santos; and "Mila," starring Maricel Soriano.

Tomorrow: "Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay," with Judy Ann Santos; "Mahal Kita, Walang Iwanan," with Aiko Melendez, Jomari Yllana and Gelli de Belen; "Dekada '70," with Vilma Santos, Christopher de Leon and Piolo Pascual; and "Mano Po 1," with an all-star cast.

Saturday: "Muling Ibalik ang Tamis ng Pag-Ibig," with Judy Ann Santos; "Mangarap Ka," with Claudine Barretto and Mark Anthony Fernandez; "Anak," with Vilma Santos and Claudine Barretto; "Madrasta," with Sharon Cuneta.

'I'm in pain …

From page A24

Under questioning from prosecutors, Urquiza said it was not uncommon for alleged abusers to serve their victims alcohol or show them pornography "to desensitize the child towards sexuality."

The alleged victim and his brother earlier told the court that Jackson showed them sexually explicit magazines and websites, and served wine to his accuser before abusing him.

But in a tough cross-examination by Mesereau, the psychologist admitted that a small percentage of children make false abuse claims, and could be manipulated by their parents.

The jurors also heard testimony from a flight attendant who admitted Jackson liked to have wine served out of soda cans when he traveled by chartered jet, but said she was not on the flight during which the star allegedly served alcohol to his accuser.

She left the courtroom smiling and waving discreetly at Jackson. *AFP*

From …

From page A24

crowd of fervent football fans led by Pete Dunham (Charlie Hunnam) and transforms from mild-mannered student to butt-kicking thug.

It's a vastly different role for Wood, who's been etched in the pop culture consciousness for the ethereal presence he brought to the role of Frodo Baggins in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

But having the 24-year-old star on the set also meant having the rabid British paparazzi. While shooting outdoors in London's Sloane Square, several photographers pulled up one day and ambushed the production.

"It was like an attack, like all of a sudden, black car drives up and it was ch-ch-ch-ch," Alexander said, simulating frenzied flashbulb noises. "In the middle of our shot! They're very aggressive. Like, I was always worried. Obviously, he's used to it, but I was so worried."

Wood appears next in "Sin City," based on the Frank Miller graphic novels, which opens April 1. He also stars in the upcoming "Everything is Illuminated," the directorial debut of actor Liev Schreiber. *AP*

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ROBOTS
MILLION DOLLAR BABY
MISS CONGENIALITY 2
HOSTAGE
HITCH
BAHAY NI LOLA 2
SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

ALI MALL CINEMAS
CLOSED TODAY, RE-OPENS SATURDAY
❶ MISS CONGENIALITY 2
❷ ALONE IN THE DARK
❸ HOSTAGE
❹ BAHAY NI LOLA 2
❺ SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
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GALLERIA 632-9115/16
1 HITCH • THX 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
2 ROBOTS 10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
3 CONFIDENCE 10:50 1:05 3:20 5:35 7:40 10:00
4 CURSED 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
5 BAHAY NI LOLA 2 10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
6 PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00
7 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
8 HOSTAGE 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
9 MILLION DOLLAR BABY 11:00 1:50 4:40 7:30 10:00
10 MS. CONGENIALITY 2 Sneak Preview

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12
1 ROBOTS 11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
2 BAHAY NI LOLA 2 11:10 1:20 3:25 5:30 7:35 9:40
3 HOSTAGE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 CURSED 10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45
5 CONFIDENCE 10:30 12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8:05 10:00
6 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
7 MS. CONGENIALITY 2 Sneak Preview

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199
1 PASSION OF THE CHRIST 11:30 1:55 4:20 6:40 9:00
2 MS. CONGENIALITY 2 Sneak Preview
3 CURSED 11:10 1:40 4:10 6:40 9:10
4 HITCH 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00
5 ROBOTS 10:50 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10 10:30
6 HOSTAGE 11:50 2:30 5:10 7:50 10:30
7 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 10:25 12:50 3:15 5:40 8:05 10:30
8 BAHAY NI LOLA 2 10:50 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31
1 ROBOTS 11:00 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:25
2 HOSTAGE 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
4 CURSED 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:25
5 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 11:00 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:25
6 MS. CONGENIALITY 2 Sneak Preview
7 MILLION DOLLAR BABY 12:30 3:10 5:50 8:30
8 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378
1 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD
2 ROBOTS
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
4 MS. CONGENIALITY 2 Sneak Preview

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575
1 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
2 PASSION OF THE CHRIST
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
4 BUNSHINSABA

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2 SON OF THE MASK 2
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
4 ROBOTS

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1 ROBOTS
2 MS. CONGENIALITY Sneak Preview
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 HOSTAGE
5 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
6 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270
1 ROBOTS
2 BUKID AY BASA 2
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
4 RAY
5 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
6 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459
1 HITCH
2 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
3 PASSION OF THE CHRIST
4 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
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6 BIRHEN NG MANAOG

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Inspiring films for Holy Week viewing

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

SOME readers have asked us for titles of inspiring and/or religious movies that they can watch during Holy Week. here's a partial list:

"The Mission" (1986): Roland Joffe directs Robert De Niro, Jeremy Irons, Aidan Quinn, etc. Productive Jesuit mission in the jungle of Brazil is threatened by greedy merchants and political factions within the church, in the late 18th century.

Magnificent-looking film (Chris Menges' cinematography won an Oscar), rich in imagery. But it goes on so long that some of its dramatic power is drained. Still, the film remains viewable due to its inspiring themes, the high-minded screenplay by Robert Bolt, and fine performance by De Niro and Irons.

"Miracle in Milan" (1951): Vittorio de Sica directs Francesco Golisano and Paolo Stoppa. Toto the Good brings cheer to a dreary village of poor people, aided by the old lady who raised him, who is now in heaven. The film is also a bitingly comic condemnation of the manner in which displaced Europeans were treated after World War Two.

"Spartacus (1960): Stanley Kubrick directs Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Jean Simmons and Tony Curtis.

Epic-scale saga about a rebellious slave who leads a crusade for freedom against the forces of the Roman Empire. Excessive length and some dramatic weaknesses are offset by the magnificent score, staggering battle scenes and fine performances.

> This list goes all the way back to 1943, with Henry King's 'The Song of Bernadette'

"The Song of Bernadette" (1943): Henry King directs Jennifer Jones and Charles Bickford. Overlong but excellent story of religious French girl in the 1800s who sees visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and incurs local wrath because of it. Linda Darnell plays the Virgin Mary, unbilled.

"Ben-Hur" (1959): William Wyler directs Charlton Heston, Jack Nicklaus and Stephen Boyd. Epic-scale rendering of Wallace's "Tales of the Christ." Heston and Boyd are well-matched as the proud Jew Ben-Hur and his boyhood friend Messala, whose blind allegiance to Rome turns him into a bitter enemy. Won a record 11 Oscars.

"The Bells of St. Mary's" (1945): Leo McCarey directs Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman. Fr. O'Malley (Crosby) is assigned to a run-down parish where Bergman is the Sister Superior.

"Quo Vadis?" (1951): Mervyn LeRoy directs Robert Taylor and Deborah Kerr. Epic MGM adaptation of novel set during the reign of Nero. Roman soldier (Taylor) has to figure out how to get close to a Christian (Kerr) without both of them being persecuted and killed. Meticulous production, fine locations and evocative score based on music of the era.

"Becket" (1964): Peter Glenville directs Richard Burton, Peter O'Toole and John Gielgud. Stunning film adapted by Edward Anhalt (who won an Oscar) from Jean Anovilh's play. It centers on the story of friendship between Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas a Becket and his English King, Henry II. Superbly acted and magnificently photographed on location in England.

"The Bible" (1966): John Huston directs Richard Harris, Ava Gardner, George C. Scott, etc. Religious epic dealing with Adam and Even, Cain and Able, Noah and the Flood—and then some (the first 22 chapters of Genesis).

"A Man for All Seasons"" (1988): Fred Zinnemann directs Paul Scofield, Wendy Hiller, Leo McKern etc. Splendid film based on Robert Bolt's play about Sir Thomas More's conflict when King Henry VIII asks his support in his break with the Pope and the formation of the Church of England. Scofield's rich performance is matched by the superb cast, and the production's vivid atmosphere. Six Oscars, including Best Picture, Director, Screenplay, Actor and Cinematography.

'Ciento'

IF YOU'RE in Baguio anytime up to the end of the month, make sure you catch the "Ciento" art exhibit and workshops at the Baguio Country Club.

"Ciento" is being held for the benefit of Migi's Corner Foundation, and as part of the celebration of the country club's centennial anniversary.

Participating are prominent visual artists **Araceli Limcaco-Dans, Aladin Antiqueño, Angelo Baldemor, Joven Ignacio, Felipe Mayoya, Azor Pazcoquin, Tito Sanchez** and **Janice Young.**

The artists will also offer workshops to the public: oil painting techniques by Pazcoquin, acrylic painting by Antiqueño, watercolor by Ignacio and Mayoya, portrait sketching by Young, sculpture by Sanchez and a PowerPoint lecture on "Stages of Artistic Growth in Children" by Dans.

The exhibit and workshops will be held at the Baguio Country Club's Training Center. Call 400-8387 or (074) 619-2050.

Migi's Corner Foundation was established in 1999 to help improve the condition of children in government hospitals. The foundation provides financial assistance for medicines or surgery for children requiring emergency medical care.

'Cleansing process . . .

From page A24

Diones said the money was from ABS-CBN Star Magic PR head Rikka Dylim.

Dylim denied this.

Cleansing process

Former presidents Balbastro, Letty Celi, Veronica Samio and Boy C. de Guia were among those present in the meeting. "There are 37 PMPC members; only three were absent," Balbastro recalled. "The meeting lasted for three hours. We argued, we cried and we shouted at each other. In the end, we were all smiling and clapping. It was like the Club underwent a cleansing process.

Balbastro added: "It's interesting to note that these people who are being implicated were noisier than the others. It's as if they wanted people to think there really was cheating. There was none. Some people tried, but they failed."

He said he had received many text messages from friends and colleagues asking about the identity of the 12 PMPC members involved, but that he refused to tell. "I don't want to crucify these people. As far as I'm concerned, this is already part of the past," he stressed. "Our president (Joe Barrameda) knows who they are, but he has said nothing."

In a previous interview, Samio, who is also head of the PMPC's grievance committee, said members involved in vote-buying would be expelled. "A deceitful act like this should not go unpunished," she said. "It's not right to cheat."

(e-mail the author at mcruz@inquirer.com.ph)

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2 MS. CONGENIALITY 12:10, 2:55, 5:40 8:25, 11:00 GP
3 ROBOTS 10:50, 1:10, 3:35 6:00, 8:25, 10:50 GP
4 COACH CARTER 11:10, 2:10, 5:10, 8:10, 11:00 PG-13

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sm city north edsa
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
CLOSED

sm city manila
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
CLOSED

sm city sta. mesa
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
CLOSED

sm city southmall
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
CLOSED

sm city bicutan
1 2 3 4
CLOSED

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1 2 3 4
CLOSED

sm supercenter sucat
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LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 2 3 4 5 6
CLOSED

sm city baguio
1 HITCH
2 CONSTANTINE
3 RACING STRIPES
4 SON OF THE MASK 2

sm city batangas
1 2 3 4
CLOSED

sm city dasmariñas
1 2 3 4
CLOSED

sm city marilao
1 2 3 4
CLOSED

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
CLOSED

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1 2 3 4
CLOSED

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
CLOSED

sm city iloilo
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
CLOSED

sm city davao
1 2 3 4 5 6
CLOSED

sm city cagayan de oro
1 2 3 4
CLOSED

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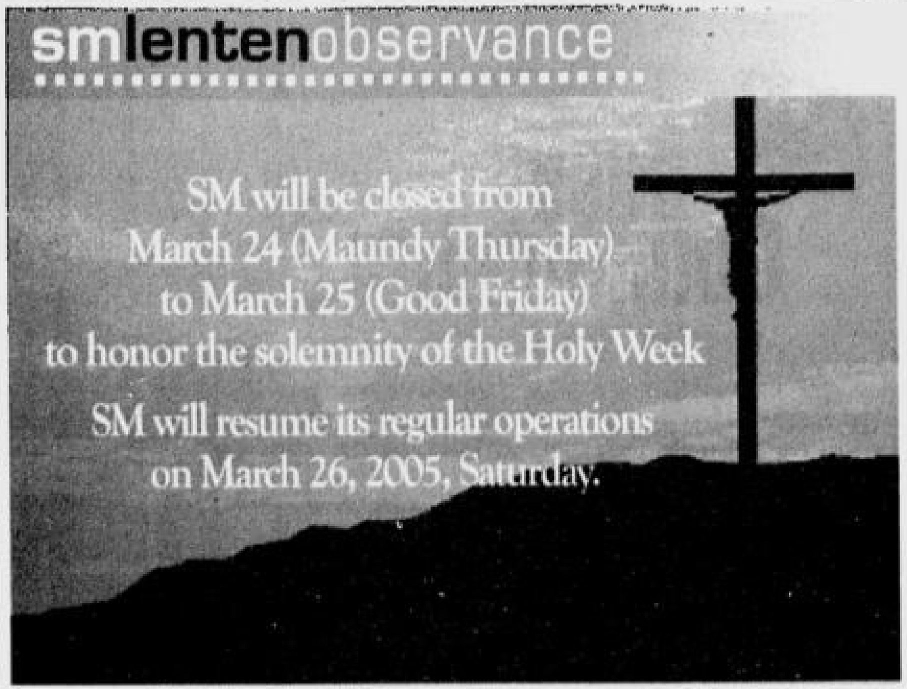
smlentenobservance

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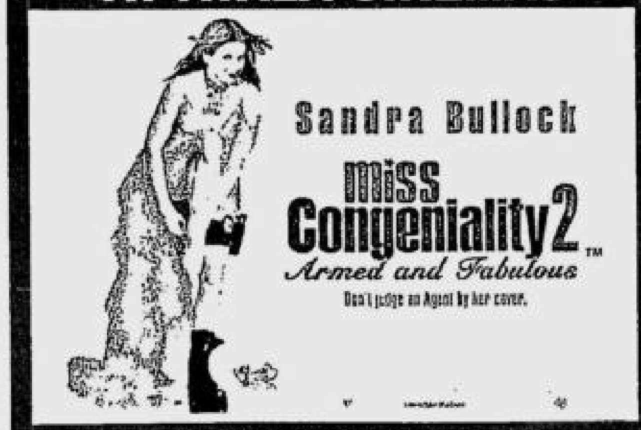
	4 CLOSED	5 CLOSED	6 CLOSED	7 CLOSED
G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 CLOSED	2 CLOSED		
	3 CLOSED	4 CLOSED		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX 1 CLOSED	2 CLOSED	3 CLOSED	
	4 CLOSED	5 CLOSED		
ACC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 HITCH	2 ROBOTS	3 THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA	
	4 HOSTAGE	5 CLOSED		
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 CLOSED			
	2 CLOSED			
GB3 GREENBELT 1	THX 1 CLOSED GUARANTEED SEATS	THX 2 CLOSED GUARANTEED SEATS	3 CLOSED GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 CLOSED GUARANTEED SEATS	5 CLOSED GUARANTEED SEATS		

OPENS MARCH 26 AT AYALA CINEMAS



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‘Cleansing process’ for PMPC officers

By Marinel R. Cruz

INVESTIGATION of the alleged vote-buying incident at the recently concluded Star Awards for Movies has started, and officers of the Philippine Movie Press Club, event organizer, now refuse to discuss it with the media.

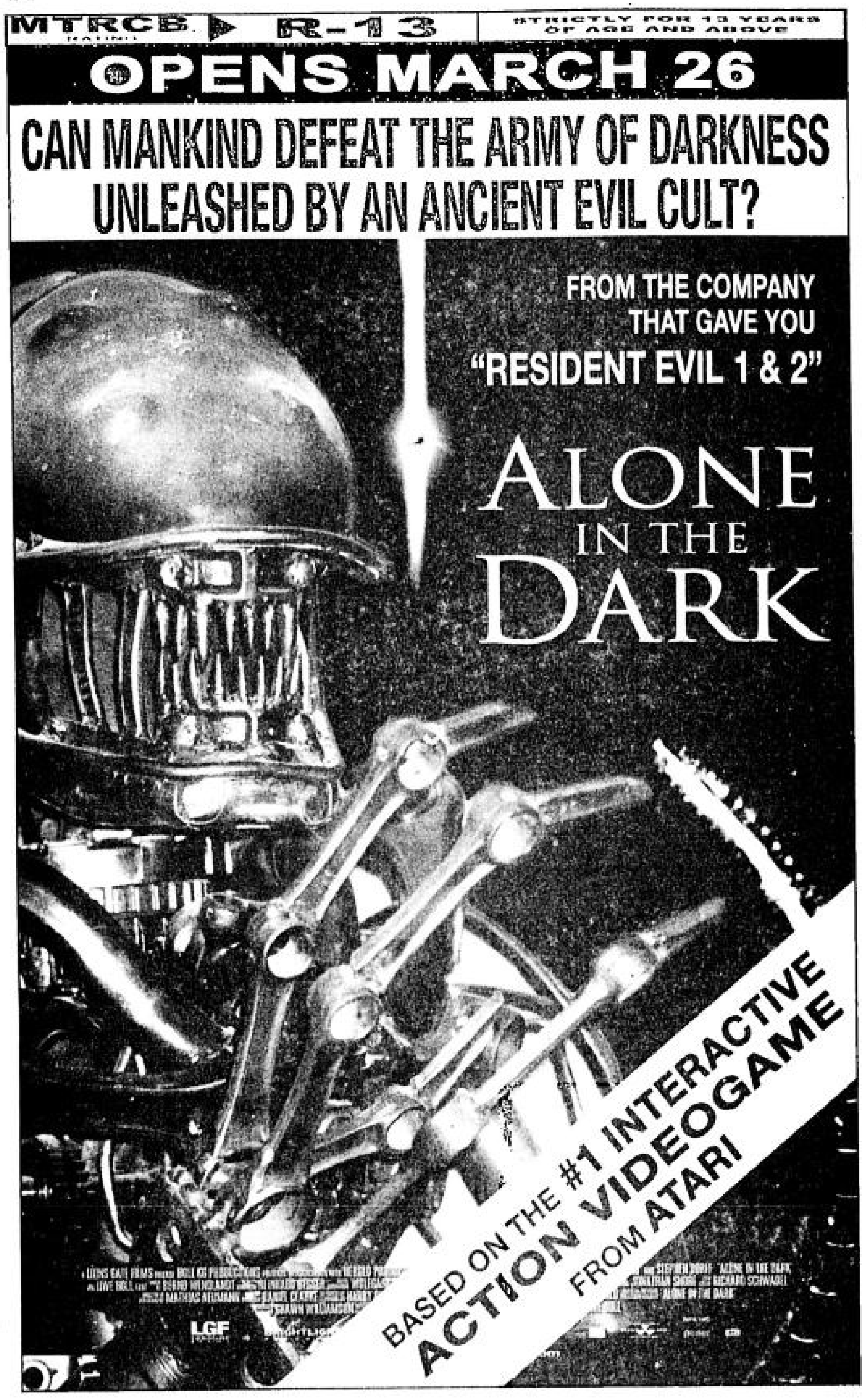
“That is my stand,” former PMPC president Billy Balbastro told INQUIRER Entertainment on Tuesday. “We—the officers and some members—have been debating on the issue among ourselves. Why should we talk about it publicly? To humiliate our colleagues?”

According to Balbastro, a meeting was held last March 16 to discuss reports that 12 PMPC members, exactly half of the voting committee, received money from an ABS-CBN official. The alleged bribe was to guarantee that Piolo Pascual would be named Best Actor for “Milan,” and the Best Actress Award would go to Kris Aquino for “Feng Shui.”

Star Cinema, movie arm of ABS-CBN, produced “Milan” and “Feng Shui.”

The 12 members who reportedly took bribes were identified during the meeting, Balbastro said. This included writer Allan Diones, who earlier confessed to receiving P5,000.

CLEANSING/ A22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‘I’m in pain, in pain ...’

SANTA MARIA, California—Michael Jackson’s child sex trial took another dramatic twist Monday when he shuffled into court late and disheveled, before breaking down in tears and being led to the bathroom.

The superstar, whose publicist said he’s suffering “excruciating” and “intolerable” back pain, apparently sobbed into a tissue at the defendant’s bench before the delayed hearing finally got underway 45 minutes late.

“I’m in pain, in pain,” the frail pop singer—who was accompanied to court by a doctor wearing surgical scrubs to explain his condition to the trial judge—told reporters at the end of the day.

Trembling

Clad in a blue-violet jacket, his hair uncombed, Jackson arrived just as the proceedings were due to begin and hobbled slowly into the courtroom with the help of his brother Jackie and an aide.

A doctor from a local hospital dressed in surgical scrubs joined Jackson’s lawyer Thomas Mesereau and prosecutor Tom Sneddon in the judge’s chambers for a meeting that lasted about 10 minutes.

The visibly trembling singer, holding a paper handkerchief in front of his mouth and dabbing his upper lip, appeared to be sobbing. Seconds later, he was helped out of the courtroom to a bathroom.

This came came less than two weeks after he narrowly escaped arrest when he turned up at court more than an hour late, wearing pajamas and slippers on March 10.

That delay, which resulted in Judge Rodney Melville issuing an arrest warrant that he later quashed, followed a pre-dawn visit to a hospital emergency room where he was treated for a back injury he suffered when he tripped while dressing.

“Mr. Michael Jackson continues to suffer from excruciating back pain” following that incident, his spokeswoman Raymone Bain said in a statement.

MICHAEL Jackson and his father Joe leave the courthouse. REUTERS

When the “King of Pop” returned to the courtroom, jurors heard from a child abuse expert who said that young victims frequently wait years before raising the alarm and often change their stories.

That testimony came after three weeks of often explosive evidence in which Jackson’s now 15-year-old accuser admitted giving contradictory stories about the alleged abuse.

“If there are multiple disclosures they are often not the same,” psychologist Anthony Urquiza told the jurors, pointing out that children “may not be accurate on issues of time.”

The defense team has pointed to apparent discrepancies over the exact dates on which Jackson allegedly fondled the boy two years ago. The lawyers have also questioned that the boy waited months before making the claims.

Not unusual

But Urquiza said this was not unusual, partly because of the stigma and humiliation sex abuses carry.

He also said that victims often adore their offenders and the “sexual act becomes an unpleasant part of a relationship that is bigger and that they enjoy.”

‘I’M IN PAIN/ A21

star group of cinemas movie guide IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

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Tel. No. 726.61.50
3 Bahay ni Lola
4 Shaolin vs Evil Dead
5 Renovation

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Tel. No. 850.42.85
1 Pacifier
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3 Hostage
4 Bahay ni Lola
5 Shaolin vs Evil Dead
6 Ms. Congeniality 2

starmall LAS PIÑAS
Tel. No. 873.50.04
1 Constantine
2 Reserved

For movie schedules visit www.clickthecity.com

From hobbit to Hooligan

AUSTIN, Texas—Before he threw a single punch in “Hooligans,” Elijah Wood had to fight just to get the movie made.

The “Lord of the Rings” star helped secure financing for the film by Lexi Alexander, which made its world premiere at the South by Southwest Film Festival, about the violent gangs—or “firms”—associated with England’s soccer teams.

ELIJAH Wood

“I read the script and loved it and then we met, and this is before it had any financial backing, before it was greenlit to go—we hit it off really well,” Wood said. “In meeting her and seeing her vision and her passion, it was kind of infectious.”

And the reaction from Alexander, a former world karate and kickboxing champ turned writer-director?

“First of all, the fact that he wanted to meet on this, I was blown away,” Alexander said. “And because it was before financing, the fact that somebody like Elijah said, ‘I want to do this,’ and then met with the potential financiers, sat down at the lunch table and said, ‘OK, we have to do this, I’m as passionate about it as Lexi,’ my God.”

Wood stars as Matt Buckman, an aspiring journalist who moves to London after being kicked out of Harvard. While staying with his sister (Claire Forlani) he falls in with a wild

FROM HOBBIT/ A21

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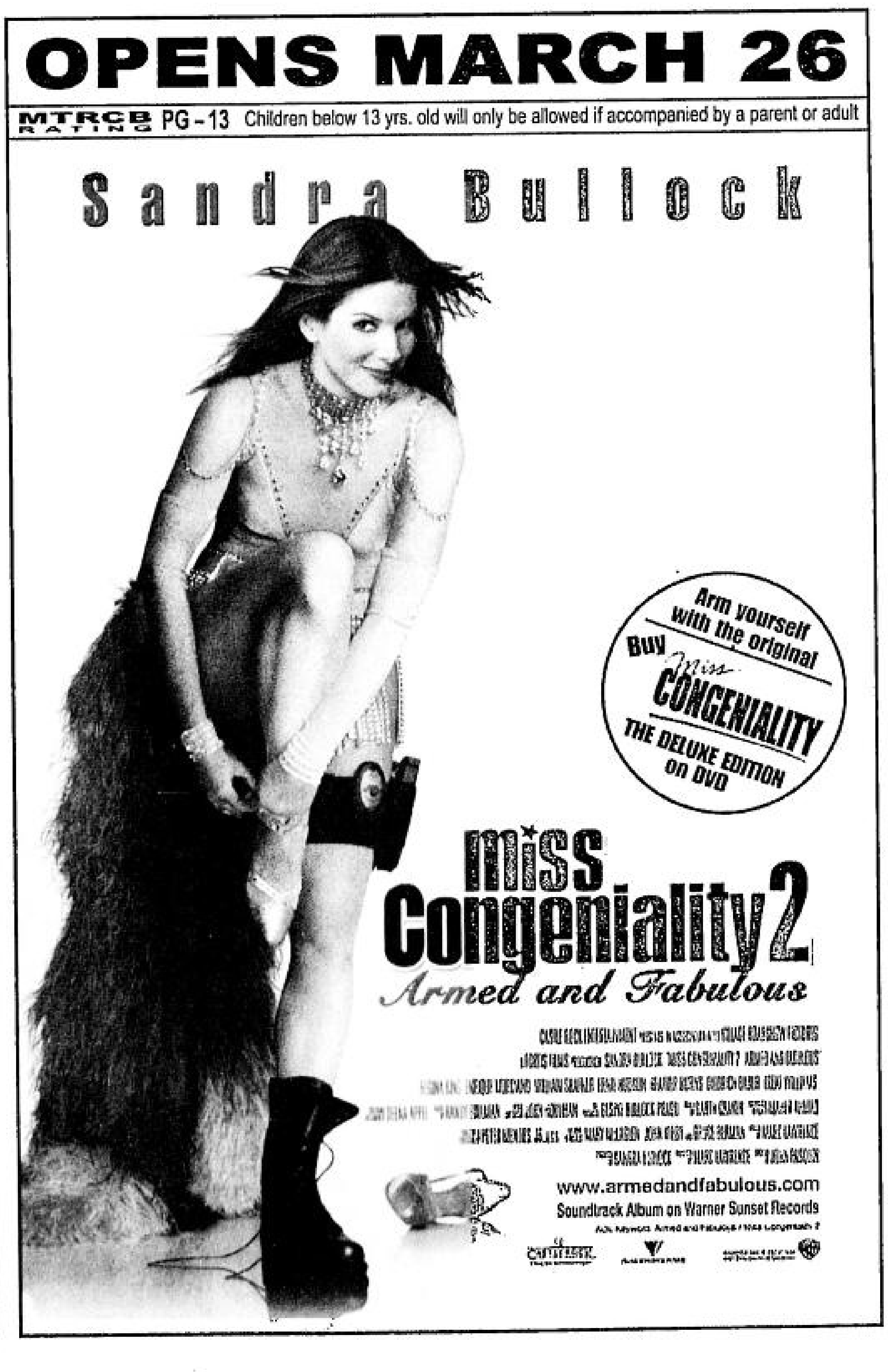
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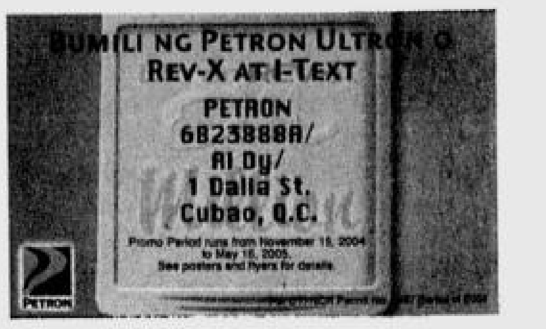

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Forex deposits in RP hit record high

ByDoris C. Dumlao

BUOYED by strong foreign inflows that perked up the peso against the US dollar this year, foreign currencies deposited with the Philippine banking system hit a new historic high of $15.49 billion as of March 4.

"These are due to inflows coming in, particularly those used to buy local stocks. Some are parked with FCDUs temporarily," BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision and examination Alberto Reyes said.

The March 4 FCDU build-up represented a 12.6-percent jump from the $13.76 billion recorded in end-March last year, which was a record-high then. At that time, the peso was sharply depreciating and people did not want to convert their foreign currency into pesos in anticipation of a higher exchange rate.

Over the succeeding months, the rise in FCDU placements continued. It has been on an uptrend even in the last three months that the peso was sharply appreciating against the US dollar.

FCDUs, considered as the country's secondary layer of foreign exchange reserves, historically attract more deposits whenever the peso is on a freefall against the US dollar. In that situation, people and enterprises with dollar revenues choose to park their funds with FCDUs instead of converting into pesos right away.

In the present case, however, the FCDU build-up is supported by huge foreign investment inflows and stronger export revenues on top of the traditional influx of overseas Filipino worker remittances.

FCDU deposits are considered as stable as 95 percent of these consisted of deposits by residents and most are being invested in Philippine sovereign bonds.

The higher build-up of FCDU deposits, however, does not necessarily translate to increased FCDU lending. Borrowers themselves, heeding lessons from the Asian currency turmoil, are averse to dollar loans these days due to the huge foreign exchange risks.

But for the first time since the Asian currency crisis erupted in 1997, the BSP is now keen on easing its foreign exchange regulations to let the market scoop up rising foreign inflows.

Incoming BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the monetary agency was looking at relaxing the overbought limit on banks because the volume of trade had gone up.

The overbought limit, set at 2.5 percent of a bank's unimpaired capital or $5 million whichever is lower, refers to the amount of US dollars that a bank is allowed to keep.

Prior to the 1997 Asian currency turmoil, the allowable overbought position was as high as 25 percent of a bank's unimpaired capital. The limit was tightened when the crisis erupted in an attempt to curb speculative attacks against the local currency.

Tetangco said liquidity in the Philippine Dealing System, the spot foreign exchange market, had now improved, with daily value turnover hitting $300-$400 million from an average of only $200 million in the past years.

PNOC finalizes sale of Malampaya stake

By Abigail L. Ho

THE STATE-OWNED Philippine National Oil Co.-Exploration Corp. (PNOC-EC) is selling 49 percent of its 10-percent stake in the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power Project to a Korean consortium led by LG International Corp.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, the state firm said the sale of the Malampaya stake to the group was approved in a meeting last Monday by the PNOC and PNOC-EC boards and endorsed to the Privatization Council immediately after that.

The Privatization Council approved sale Tuesday.

However, despite the approval, the sale is not yet considered consummated as the other members of the Malampaya consortium can still challenge the Korean group's offer for PNOC-EC's stake in the natural gas find.

Aside from PNOC-EC, other members of the consortium are Shell Philippines Exploration BV (SPEX) and Chevron Texaco Philippines, each having a 45-percent stake in the Malampaya project.

PNOC-EC said the two consortium members could "match the offer of LG International Corp. if they wish to acquire a proportionate share of the interest being privatized."

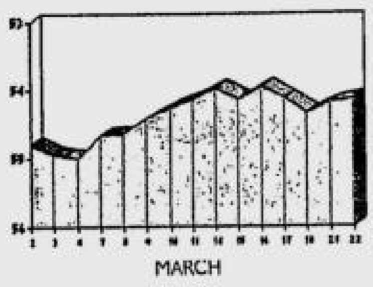
PNOC-EC president Eduardo Mañalac said in a telephone interview yesterday that SPEX

PNOC/B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



₱54.125 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 22, 2005

¥104.93 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 22, 2005

GOLD: $430.70-431.20

per ounce Hong Kong, March 22, 2005

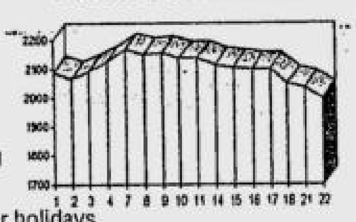
CURRENCIES

March 23, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.759244	1.000000	54.2660
Japan	Yen	0.007225	0.009516	0.5164
United Kingdom	Pound	1.440817	1.897700	102.9806
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097349	0.128218	6.9579
Switzerland	Franc	0.644629	0.849041	46.0741
Canada	Dollar	0.627008	0.825832	44.8146
Singapore	Dollar	0.466022	0.613798	33.3084
Australia	Dollar	0.596936	0.786225	42.6653
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.013962	2.652590	143.9454
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.202454	0.266652	14.4701
Brunei	Dollar	0.464596	0.611920	33.2065
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000106	0.0058
Thailand	Baht	0.019686	0.025928	1.4070
UAE	Dirham	0.206721	0.272272	14.7751
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.317100	71.4737
Argentina	Peso	0.260461	0.343053	18.6161
Brazil	Real	0.279185	0.367715	19.9544
Denmark	Kroner	0.134275	0.176853	9.5971
India	Rupee	0.017410	0.022931	1.2444
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.199828	0.263193	14.2824
Mexico	New Peso	0.067518	0.088928	4.8258
New Zealand	Dollar	0.559337	0.736703	39.9779
Norway	Kroner	0.122712	0.161624	8.7707
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012790	0.016846	0.9142
South Africa	Rand	0.124978	0.164609	8.9327
Korea	Won	0.000752	0.000991	0.0538
Sweden	Kroner	0.109594	0.144346	7.8331
Syria	Pound	0.014626	0.019264	1.0454
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024374	0.032103	1.7421

STOCK MARKET

Market takes a break

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



LOCAL financial markets were closed starting yesterday for the long Easter holiday break. Trading in the local stock market resumes on Monday.

Share prices closed lower during the shortened week as investors locked-in profits ahead of the Easter holidays.

They said investors were cautious amid reports of possible terrorist attacks by the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group during the long weekend that started yesterday.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index shed 34.63 points on Tuesday to 1,999.15 after trading between 1,999.08 and 2,033.78.

Volume reached 1.06 billion shares valued at P5.09 billion. The broader all-shares index fell 8.04 points to 1,195.13. Losers beat gainers 65 to 19, with 54 stocks unchanged.

"The shortened trading week and the lack of fresh positive leads are driving investors away from the market, which is testing support at 2,000 points," Accord Capital Equities analyst Lawrence de Leon said.

GMA 7, Guam Cablevision sign deal

TELEVISION giant GMA Network Inc. has signed a license agreement with Guam Cablevision LLC for the distribution of GMA Pinoy TV, its international channel in Guam.

Subscribers of Guam Cablevision will be able to preview GMA Pinoy TV on Channel 21 for free until March 31 as actual subscription starts April 1.

Guam Cablevision is the second carrier of GMA Pinoy TV after GMA Network signed an agreement with IPS Inc. for the carriage of GMA Pinoy TV in Japan via the Access TV DTH (Direct-to-Home) platform.

GMA Pinoy TV will also be carried by Americable in some areas in Japan.

GMA Network has spent about $4 million to upgrade its facilities in preparation for its international channel operations.

A new broadcast automation system and servers were installed to handle additional channels and enable GMA Network to handle a maximum of 30 channels.

GMA Network also upgraded its master control facilities and presentation suites from analog to digital. GMA likewise acquired state-of-the-art equipment for both international and domestic operations.

Joseph Francia, head of operations of GMA Network International Channel, said that since GMA Pinoy TV began its test broadcast in Japan last March 1 and numerous inquiries for subscription and applications have so far been received.

"While we have not done an official count as we are still on test broadcast, the response has been really positive," Francia said.

GMA Pinoy TV delivers most

GMA-7/ B2

Sales of pre-need firms down 18.2%

SALES of pre-need firms dropped 18.2 percent in January as the number of plans also shrinked by 7.8 percent.

A monthly sales report by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) showed that gross sales fell P2.3 billion from P2.8 billion during the same month last year.

Sales of pension plans fell 45.7 percent to P894.9 million from P1.65 billion in January last year. The number of pension plans sold also declined 40 percent to 12,844.

Sales of education plans also slumped 19.9 percent to P777.52 million from P971.16 million during the same period last year. The number of education plans dipped 31.68 percent to 6,847.

Life plans sold, however, jumped 223.7 percent to P629.04 million from P194.33 million. The number of life plans sold likewise soared 126.6 percent to 15,822.

The Philippine Federation of Pre-need Plan Companies Inc. (PFPPCI) expects the industry to grow sales by more than 21 percent this year, driven by higher investment income from higher interest rates and by tapping new markets in the provinces. Investment income accounts for 20 to 30 percent of the total income of pre-need companies.

A portion of a pre-need firm's investment is placed in government securities, but the bulk of the growth expected this year would still come from sales, federation officials said.

Growth last year has been largely due to price increases.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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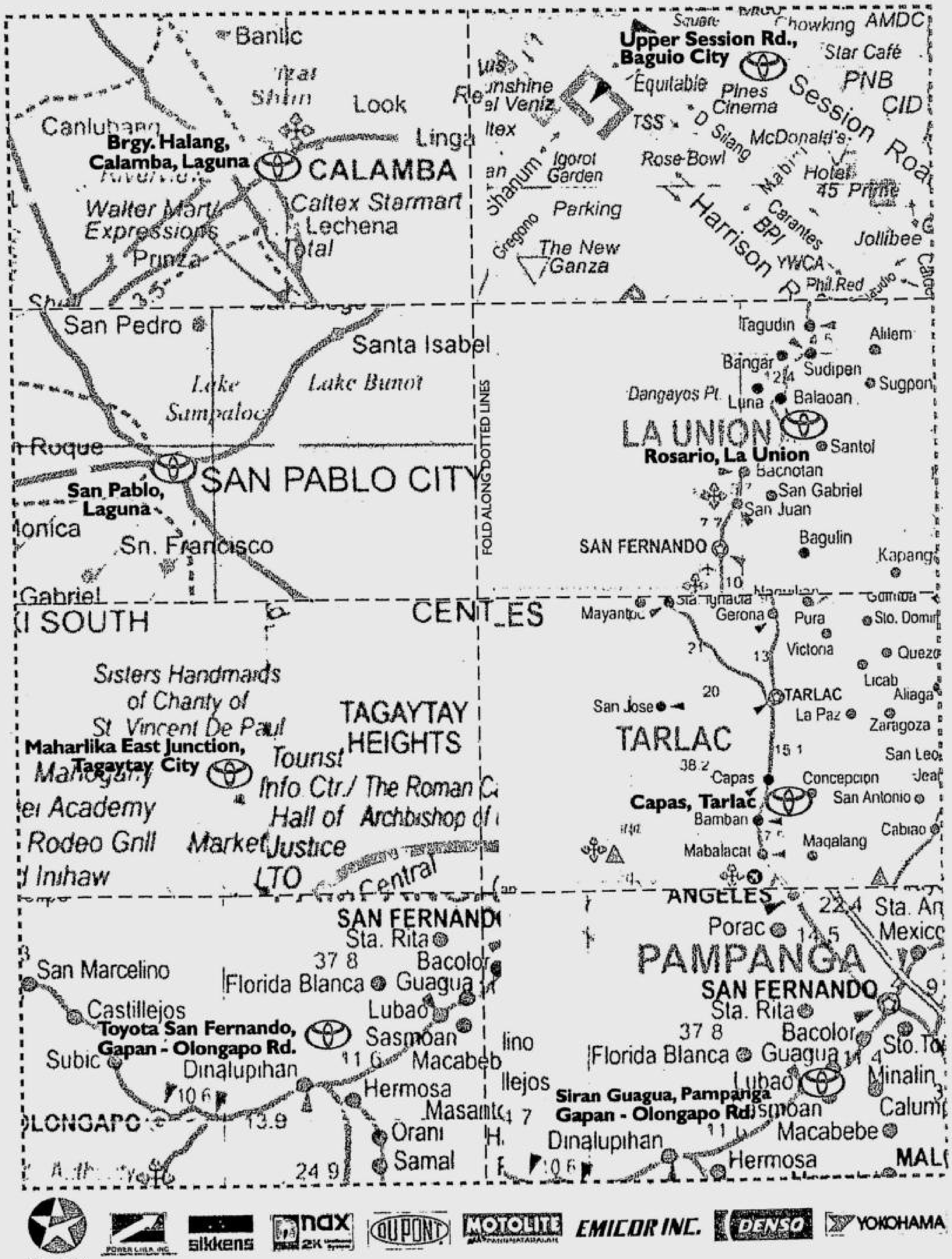

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POWER LUBE, INC.
sikkens
nax 2K
DUPONT
MOTOLITE
EMICOR INC.
DENSO
YOKOHAMA

March trade fair sales up 111% to P122M

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Trade Fair, the country's biggest domestic exhibition for small and medium enterprises, yielded P122.2 million in total sales, or 111 percent higher than the P57.8 million posted in 2004.

The Department of Trade and Industry reported that this year's NTF, held March 9-13, attracted some 4,000 buyers and businesses as well as 15,000 visitors.

At least 200 SMEs from 17 regions were featured in this year's NTF. The businesses from Region 7 (Cebu, Bohol, Negros Oriental and Siquijor) earned the highest with P55.3 million.

Exhibitors from Region 3 or Central Luzon ranked second with P14.8 million in earnings. Region 11, or Southern Mindanao, earned P10.7 million.

Organized by the DTI's Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, the five-day annual serves as a platform for SMEs to establish contacts with retail giants and international buyers.

Felicitas Agoncillo-Reyes, Trade assistant secretary and Citem executive director, said the event also strengthened the government's export strategy.

The NTF featured exhibits on fashion accessories, home furnishings and houseware, gifts, arts and crafts, and food products.

The top sellers were houseware and home décor from Negros Oriental Arts and Heritage, which generated a total P41.59 million sales.

Second bestseller was the kitchen and tableware products from Casamoda Handicrafts based in Nueva Ecija, which yielded P9.82 million. Arts and crafts products from Silagan Handicraft in Davao was third with P7.97 million sales.

"We hope that eventually these products find their niche in the international market and that these small firms expand their collaboration with the retailers, wholesalers and foreign buyers they met in NTF," Reyes said.

She said Citem was looking forward to "graduating" the SMEs from the grassroots into becoming exporters.

Government data show that SMEs generate 32 percent of the country's gross domestic product, and 70 percent of employment opportunities. SMEs represent 60 percent of all of the country's exporters.

Belle Corp. eyes sale of Manila Bay property

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

LEISURE homes developer Belle Corp. is selling its seven-hectare reclaimed property in the Manila Bay area to trim down its P2.7-billion debt.

Willy Ocier, Belle vice chair, said that the company's board of directors approved the sale of the property located along Roxas Boulevard in Parañaque near Baclaran Church.

The sale is in line with the company's thrust to focus on residential, leisure development, tourism, retirement and wellness center development.

Belle Bay City Corp. (BBCC), a 44-percent owned subsidiary of Belle, used to be part of a consortium that owned 19 hectares of reclaimed land along Roxas Boulevard.

A mixed-use complex was supposed to be put up on the property.

But due to the weakness in the economy, shareholders decided to dissolve the BBCC and subdivide the property among themselves. Belle received seven hectares.

"The property, which has commercial potentials, is considered a non-core asset... Belle aims to focus on its core development in Tagaytay Highlands, as well as retirement and wellness centers in non-urban areas," Ocier told the INQUIRER. "Valuation and appraisal studies will be undertaken immediately. Belle aims to take advantage of renewed investor confidence to further improve its financial condition."

The company hopes to complete the sale this year since the property market is showing signs of recovery, Ocier said.

Belle still has to come up with a figure for the property.

Ocier also said that Belle had managed to trim its debt from P10 billion in 1997 to P2.7 billion to date.

"Belle's financial woes started in 1997, when serious management missteps saw its debt balloon to P10 billion," he said. "We have worked hard to slash our debt over the years."

Also, Belle's board approved a capital quasi-reorganization to reduce its P5.4-billion retained earnings deficit.

A deficit limits a company's ability to issue dividends to its shareholders.

Belle would soon apply the company's additional paid-in capital worth P3.269 billion to bring down its P5.4-billion retained earnings deficit to P2.133 billion.

Sun taps China firm for $200-M rollout

By Clarissa S. Batino

SUN CELLULAR has tapped Chinese firm Huawei Technologies Inc. to undertake the network's $200-million expansion project, installing about 700 additional cellular sites, to boost the mobile carrier's coverage and reach.

Huawei Technologies is one of the largest telecommunications equipment producer and the seventh largest electronics company in China.

The Chinese company said it wanted to do aggressive business in the Philippines and is currently in talks with all major telco players for supplies and contracts.

The 700 additional cellular sites would boost Sun Cellular's network to about 2,000 sites from the present 1,300.

The expansion would allow the third player in the digital wireless sector to accommodate as much as 6 million subscribers from the current capacity of about 2 million.

Sun Cellular is the trade name of Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc., a unit of Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc. Lance Gokongwei is the president of the firm.

"The installation of additional 700 cellular sites forms part of the expansion [project]," a Digitel official said. "It could consume about half of the $200-million budget."

LANCE Gokongwei

By the end of February, Sun Cellular expected to have 1.7 million customers, largely drawn by the popularity of its 24/7 unlimited call and text within-network plan, the official said.

For P350 a month or P100 for 7 days, Sun subscribers may enjoy unlimited services.

The Gokongwei carrier recently expanded its 24/7 menu by adding a pure unlimited, within-network text plan of P50 for 7 days and P150 for one month.

Before the buffet deal was launched in October last year, Sun Cellular had only about 700,000 customers. The company said that, since then, it had been adding 6,000 subscribers each day.

Sun Cellular said if it could maintain the take-up trend, it could add 2 million customers between March and December. The company expects to have more than 4 million subscribers by the end of the year.

As for Huawei, the company said it was also negotiating with the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc., Bayan Telecommunications Phils. Inc.

Aaron Lin, an official of Huawei's local unit, said that the company would like to expand in the Philippines, given the aggressive competition in the telco sector.

Huawei was put up only in 1988, but it had become a strong multinational company in less than 20 years.

Last year, the company posted $5.6 billion in revenue, up 113 percent against the previous year.

Of its total sales, $2.3 billion came from overseas. Its net profit in 2004 stood at $459.1 million.

Huawei employs 22,000 people, about 45 percent of whom are engaged in research and development.

Huawei has six research centers in China and overseas facilities in the United States, Russia, India and Sweden.

DTI wants piece of S. Korea market

THE GOVERNMENT is promoting the country as a destination for foreigners seeking cosmetic surgery after a study has shown the viability of promoting such services to the South Korean market, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

In a statement, the DTI said that its Philippine Trade and Investment Center in Seoul learned that cosmetic surgery was popular among Korean women.

According to the study, most of the women want to have folds in their eyelids (blepharoplasty), and enhance their cheeks, noses, lips and breasts.

PTIC-Seoul's study also revealed that three out of five Korean women aged 24 to 35 had undergone cosmetic surgery at least one. It also shows that four out of five women are thinking of having two more operations.

The agency said the women could be drawn to the Philippines for their cosmetic needs. The agency said such procedures cost between $1,500 and $2,500 per operation in South Korea while it costs only $700 here.

Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos said the DTI had adopted a business model that linked Philippine-based cosmetic surgery practitioners with Korean travel agents. The Korean travel agencies are being urged to include such services in their vacation packages.

"The conceptualization of this business model is in line with the DTI's thrust to develop globally competitive Philippine service industries in health and wellness, retirement and leisure, information technology and logistics," Santos said.

The official added that the business model was being implemented through a memorandum of agreement between the Ophthalmic Consultants Philippines Co.—better known as Eye Republic—and the Manila-based Korean travel agency Bingo Tour.

Under the two-year pact, Eye Republic—which is a network of ophthalmology clinics in the country—would provide their services to Korean patients who want eye and cosmetic surgery here.

For its part, Bingo Tour would provide all the needs for medical tourism between South Korea and the Philippines.

"This is the first working business model of a specific cosmetic surgery product targeting a niche market," Santos said.

"The success of its application would serve as basis for expanding the coverage of cosmetic services to include weight-reducing procedures and spa services," he added. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

IT sector seen to turn into $10-B industry

By Doris C. Dumlao

FINANCE Secretary Cesar Purisima has identified the information technology services sector, as well as tourism, mining and agriculture, as key enterprise areas which the Philippines could harness, turning each into $10-billion industries over the next six years.

"If our population were to [reach] 100 million in six years time, we want our per capita to be $1,500, and that means that the GDP (gross domestic product) of the country should be around $150 billion," Purisima said in a recent speech to the Bosconian International Chamber of Commerce.

"We are presently at about $80 billion (GDP) so we need to grow over the next six years so that we can make that happen," Purisima said during a testimonial dinner for incoming Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr.

But Purisima said the country would not be able to grow with domestic savings alone. It should instead attract foreign investments.

He said Tetangco would have to do a good job in the BSP by keeping the exchange rate stable during his six-year term in order to keep inflation and interest rates at reasonable levels.

"More than that, we need businessmen to make the Philippines an 'entrepolis,' a haven for entrepreneurs," he said, urging businessmen to explore opportunities in the four sectors. "We need more of your money in business than ... in savings accounts."

By the time Tetangco retires, tourism, for instance, can easily yield $10 billion in annual revenue, Purisima said.

"Right now, tourism is a $2.3-billion industry," said Purisima, basing the figure on the 2.3 million arrivals each year. "In six years time, there's no reason why we shouldn't get 10 million tourists. Our neighbors Malaysia and Thailand get that many right now, if not more so. Why shouldn't we, when we have better natural resources?"

Another potential growth area is the IT services. Purisima noted that the call center business had turned into a $1-billion industry.

"If we get a million more employed in this industry, that can easily turn into a $10-billion industry," he said. "IT has high value-added, and I think our challenge there is to move from data encoding and call centers all the way to software development."

Being the fifth most mineralized country in the world, Purisima said mining could also turn into a $10-billion industry in six years.

Agriculture, he also said, could be another major growth area due to the Philippines' proximity to China, the world's biggest consumer.

"The Chinese have overtaken the Americans in the consumption of everything, except fuel and automobile," he said. "In the consumption of chicken, corn and other foods, they are now number one in the world. Why am I mentioning this? We are right at the doorstep of the fastest growing country in the world. So, clearly, agriculture is going to be another $10-billion potential."

For these things to be realized, Purisima said, the country's fiscal position must be balanced and more taxes collected. The revenue must go into infrastructure, as well as education, health care and other social services.

"The solution is to pay more taxes to move to a virtuous cycle, employ resources to create more businesses," he said.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 22, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2	52,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	27.5	27.5	26.5	27	713,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57	57	54.5	54.5	1,012,400
China Banking Corp.	660	660	660	660	100
Citystate Savings Bank	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	1,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.77	0.77	0.75	0.75	2,770,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	48	48	47.5	47.5	8,600
International Exch. Bank	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.5	175,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	35.5	36.5	35.5	36	166,600
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	98	98	98	98	500
Philippine National Bank	36.5	36.5	35	35.5	86,900
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	1,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	29.5	29.5	29.5	29.5	41,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.08	1.06	1.06	1.08	325,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	150	150	150	150	1,090
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1720	1720	1720	1720	300
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	16	16	16	16	150,200
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.26	1.28	1.22	1.26	4,008,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	900	900	890	890	26,110
Ipeople Inc.	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.85	155,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0525	0.0525	0.05	0.05	5,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	2,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.04	2.04	2.04	2.04	3,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.45	3.5	3.45	3.5	1,666,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	23,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1430	1435	1425	1430	92,790
Ivantage Corp.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1,260,000
Philweb Corp.	0.021	0.021	0.019	0.02	117,700,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	30,000
Manila Electric Co. B	28.5	28.5	27	27.5	933,800
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.8	6.8	6.4	6.4	42,036,000
Petron Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.75	3.75	5,681,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.52	1.54	1.48	1.5	1,121,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.7	1.76	1.68	1.7	1,039,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	8	8.1	8	8	2,739,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.58	0.58	70,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	50,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	360,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.6	3.65	726,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	35,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	60,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	17,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	36	36	35	35	114,100
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28	28.5	27.5	27.5	65,900
Pancake House Inc.	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	30,000
RFM Corp.	0.98	0.98	0.96	0.96	100,000
San Miguel Corp. A	55.5	56	55.5	56	40,800
San Miguel Corp. B	81	81	80	81	122,500
Universal Robina Corp.	12	12	12	12	105,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	650,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	249,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	42,500,000
Ayala Corp.	7.8	7.8	7.5	7.6	3,476,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.95	4.95	4.85	4.85	984,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.14	2.14	2.06	2.06	234,000
APC Group Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.38	0.38	1,800,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	35,000,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	6,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.66	1.7	1.66	1.7	40,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	2,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.8	0.8	0.78	0.78	110,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	24.5	25	24.25	24.75	50,500
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.16	1.16	1.08	1.1	25,966,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	50,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	680,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	2,110,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.65	3.7	3.55	3.6	1,837,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	3,000,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.58	1.58	630,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	10	10	10	10	356,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	57.5	57.5	54.5	54.5	879,500
House Of Investments Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1,125,000
Ionics Inc.	1.58	1.6	1.58	1.58	70,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.65	355,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.04	2.04	2.02	2.02	118,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.56	1.56	3,840,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	550,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.53	0.53	0.52	0.52	13,950,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	600,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.06	1.1	1.06	1.1	106,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	260,000
SM Investments Corp.	248	248	234	241	6,104,400
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	8,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	660,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.34	1,260,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	14,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.9	8	7.9	8	25,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.62	1.7	1.6	1.7	187,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	10,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	2,580,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.26	1.32	1.24	1.3	19,975,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1	1.06	1	1	1,180,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.48	1.54	1.48	1.54	1,462,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.3	0.28	0.28	3,710,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	15.5	15.5	15.25	15.5	362,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	6,200
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	8.6	8.6	8.1	8.1	5,482,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	47,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	2,927,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.31	0.32	0.3	0.32	4,900,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	1,480,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	50,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.49	0.5	26,140,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.72	1.74	1.66	1.66	9,780,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.4	2.4	2.36	2.36	150,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	170,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	200,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.19	790,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.85	4.85	4.65	4.65	950,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.74	1.74	1.66	1.68	412,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.9	3,171,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	10,200,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.8	152,000
Benguet Corp. A	8.2	8.7	8.2	8.5	70,000
Benguet Corp. B	22	24	22	24	19,200
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.38	4,920,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.41	1,110,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	19,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.025	78,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.008	167,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	300,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.4	1.4	1.38	1.4	350,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	40	40.5	39.5	39.5	2,105,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.29	400,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	80,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	100,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	200,000
Pacifica	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	10,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	10,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.18	0.185	0.17	0.18	11,460,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.38	0.42	0.38	0.42	120,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	5,353,090	92,781,650.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	626,196,400	4,798,714,205.00
PRO	56,749,000	110,717,320.00
Mining	283,626,600	92,768,690.00
OIL	101,890,000	2,935,400.00
GRAND TOTALS :	1,073,815,090	5,097,917,265.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	604.83	DOWN 21.69
Comm'l & Ind'l	3,127.50	DOWN 33.20
PRO	758.65	DOWN 16.56
Mining	3,323.19	DOWN 0.52
OIL	2.89	UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	1,195.13	DOWN 8.04
Composite	1,999.15	DOWN 34.63

NO. OF ADVANCES: 19; NO. OF DECLINES: 65; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 54; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 138; NO. OF TRADES: 4,929

GMA 7, Guam Cablevision sign deal

From page B1

of GMA Network's popular news and public affairs and general entertainment programs that have made the Network the No. 1 TV station in Metro Manila.

The channel showcases GMA's high-rating programs including Filipino primetime newscast "24 Oras"; longest running noontime show "Eat Bulaga"; the longest running Filipino gag show "Bubble Gang"; the No. 1 Filipino fantasy series "Mulawin"; Filipino public affairs show "Imbestigador," and the official Filipino Concert TV "S.O.P."

GMA Network is also set to launch its international channel in the United States next month and is finalizing an agreement with a leading cable company there. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

BSP may tighten monetary policies

By Doris C. Dumlao

APPARENTLY bowing to pressures arising from the uptrend in consumer spending and the recent increase in the US Federal Reserve rates, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday hinted at the need for monetary tightening soon.

The US Fed on Tuesday raised its overnight funds rate by another 25 basis points to 2.75 percent, the seventh quarterly consecutive increase since it began boosting interest rates to curb inflationary pressures.

"The Fed hike was widely expected. Global inflationary tendencies point to higher interest rates abroad," BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said yesterday.

"The implications are on the interest rate differentials and their potential impact on the exchange rate. This will be covered in the assessment of the inflation outlook," he said.

Tetangco said the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board was closely watching another major factor that could aggravate the uptrend in consumer prices—the demand-pull pressures or spending sprees by consumers.

"While supply factors remain the main source of price pressures, we need to make sure that any emerging demand-related pressures are appropriately addressed," Tetangco said.

Aside from increasing its own overnight policy rates—which have been kept at the same level since July 2003—the BSP also has the option of increasing the reserve requirement on banks.

The BSP's overnight borrowing or reverse repurchase rate stands at 6.75 percent while the overnight lending or repurchase rate is at 9 percent.

With higher oil prices creating inflationary pressure in the US, it is uncertain whether the US Fed's interest rates will continue to rise at a measured pace. A former US central bank official Alan Blinder even predicted that short-term rates might go up not by one-quarter percent but by one-half percent in order to fight inflation pressures.

Higher short-term interest rates tend to discourage consumer spending as they translate to higher monthly payments on credit card payments.

The International Monetary Fund, in a recent country report, said the BSP must start raising its interest rates "to guide inflationary pressures down," projecting that inflation will again overshoot the official ceiling of 5-6 percent this year.

In its full report on the 2004 Article IV consultations with the Philippine government released Tuesday, the IMF said about a third of the increase in the headline inflation rate since end-2003 was due to factors other than identifiable supply side pressures.

"Indicators of demand side pressure and slack also suggested that the situation might be turning," the report said.

The Fund noted that capacity utilization of enterprises was rising and tended to move up with the inflation.

"Moreover, concerns about the macroeconomic framework remain paramount in the minds of market participants, given overriding fiscal problem. In this light, a rate increase would send a positive signal about the BSP's commitment to the inflation target," the report said.

Creditor OKs restructuring of Citra loan

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE National Bank has approved the restructuring of Citra Metro Manila Tollways Corp.'s $134-million loan.

The restructuring program calls for the reduction of the principal loan and the stretching of the repayment period to six years starting 2005.

Last year, Land Bank of the Philippines also started the restructuring of its $80-million exposure in Citra up to 2008.

The joint venture of Philippine National Construction Corp. and Indonesian firm PT Citra spent about $500 million to build the Metro Manila Skyway project in 1995, a six-lane elevated highway from Makati to Bicutan.

About 70 percent of the amount was financed through borrowings from local and foreign creditors.

Sources said that only the two banks remaining outstanding exposures in the skyway project. The other Citra creditors earlier drew on the $134-million stand-by facility that the company opened five years ago.

As part of the restructuring, PNB had agreed to reduce the principal amount by 1.2 percent or by about $1.43 million.

The Citra loans had turned sour, leaving PNB and Land Bank with no other choice but to agree to restructure the obligations.

PNB started collecting 3 percent of the principal debt on March 15. The principal will have to be paid every quarter.

By 2006, the servicing of the principal debt will go up to 3.75 percent, increasing to 4 percent by the third year, to 4.5 percent on the fourth year and to 4.75 percent on the fifth year or by 2009.

By the end of the fifth year, Citra would have settled 80 percent of its obligations with PNB.

The remaining 20 percent will be collected in 2010 to be divided equally into quarterly payments.

Citra's contract with the government supposedly involved three stages, which when completed, should have provided an elevated highway from Makati City all the way to Alabang while the ground level from Sucat to Alabang and Magallanes to Bicutan should have been rehabilitated.

MEMORANDU OF AGREEMENT
Covering the Grant
of BSP Financial Assistance to the
Export Development Council
for Export Promotion and Development

A BOOST TO THE EXPORT SECTOR
The country's total exports are expected to grow at double-digit levels in the next two years and hit $50 billion by 2006. This should foster economic growth, increase dollar inflows and generate employment. To boost export promotion and development, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is extending a grant worth P10.5 million to the Export Development Council (EDC). BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura and Trade Secretary Juan Santos look at the agreement covering the grant after the signing. With them are (from left): BSP Deputy Governors Armando L. Suratos and Amando M. Tetangco Jr., BSP director Celia Gonzales; EDC executive director Fernando Cala; Confederation of Philippine Exporters president Sergio Ortiz-Luis, and BSP Assistant Governor Diwa Guinigundo.

Mirant, Iloilo LGU ink deal on coal-fired plant

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Mirant Global Corp. (MGC) and the municipal government of Barotac Viejo in Iloilo have signed a memorandum of understanding on the construction of a 100-megawatt coal-fired plant in the town amid opposition from church and environmental groups.

Barotac Viejo Mayor Raul Tupas and Ariel Arman Lapus, MGC vice president for Visayas and new business, recently signed the four-page MOU in Barotac Viejo 64.4 km north of Iloilo City.

Under the agreement, Barotac Viejo will assist the power firm in developing the proposed project site. The municipality will also allow the temporary use of its facilities and other assistance in the implementation of the project.

MGC in turn will design, build and operate the coal plant, estimated to cost from $100-$120 million, and assist in the "development of the economy" and "local infrastructure."

MGC is a joint venture between Mirant-Philippines and Global District Holdings Inc., a subsidiary of the Metrobank Group.

The power firm is planning to put up the coal plant in the villages of San Francisco and Santiago in Barotac Viejo.

In the MOU, the two parties cited the need for an increase in the baseload capacity on Panay Island to offset the projected power supply deficit that energy officials said would hit the island within the next three years.

Project proponents said that during the power summit in Iloilo on Nov. 26 last year, "it was the consensus that the most feasible solution" to the power problem was the putting up of a coal-fired plant.

The MOU was signed after the village councils of Santiago and San Francisco and the municipal council passed separate resolution endorsing the project.

Tourism campaign focuses on Japanese travelers

KEEN on strengthening the Philippines' position as a favored tourist and holiday destination, the Department of Tourism (DOT) has begun an aggressive market-specific crusade in the Japanese market.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano says Japan is the Philippines' second largest country-source of visitor arrivals, with 382,307 arrivals in 2004. For 2005, the DOT is aiming for 481,250 visitor arrivals from that country. Ultimately, the objective is to reach 1.0 million arrivals in 2008, or an average growth rate of 28 percent in four years.

"We intend to be the market leader in the Asean by 2008, with a 2.5 percent market share of Japanese arrivals to Asean," he declares.

According to Durano, Japan poses a tremendous tourism potential, as it is the world's second largest economy and has one of the highest per capita GDP (gross domestic products). It is also one of the biggest sources of the world's outbound travelers, with 13.3 million in 2003. Japanese tourists also rank among the biggest tourism spenders worldwide: in 2002 alone, they spend some $26.7 billion.

Durano earlier ordered the creation of marketing teams to execute and monitor the DOT's market-specific campaigns for mainland China, Japan, Korea, and the *balikbayan* market. An exhaustive market research by specialists in these priority markets was conducted to better define the market segments and understand their peculiar needs and preferences. Industry players specializing in these markets were also consulted to validate the outputs of the research.

These market-specific campaigns share two common elements: they employ advertising materials in the target country's native language and use local media networks for distribution. For Japan, the campaign depicts the Philippines as "Premium Resort Islands," as studies showed that the words "resort" and "islands" stir up positive images in the minds of Japanese tourists.

A key element in the Philippines' marketing efforts in Japan is its participation in World Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan.

The World Expo, which will run from March 25 to Sept. 25, revolves around the theme "Nature's Wisdom" and highlights the need to pursue sustainable development that is harmonious with the environment. Being the first world exposition of the 21st century, it is expected to attract people from all over the world and create an excellent platform for addressing various environmental issues such as energy conservation.

During the World Expo, the Philippines will operate its own pavilion and the DOT expects at least 1.5 million visitors, predominantly Japanese. The structure, which uses the coconut as inspiration for all its design and creative elements, works around the thematic statement "Usbong: Seeds of Life." The pavilion will exhibit various aspects of Philippine life and culture, from its world-class cuisine and export products, to the "Best Practices" and success stories in environmental conservation of selected Philippine communities.

PNOC finalizes sale of Malampaya stake

From page B1

and Chevron Texaco would be given 15 days upon receipt of information about the sale to make their offers.

If no offer would be made during that period, he said the sale would be considered final and financial closing would take place.

The Korean group should also fulfill the terms and conditions contained in the farm-in agreement that the PNOC and PNOC-EC boards approved for the sale of the Malampaya stake.

The LG International-led Korean consortium is composed of Korea Gas Corp., Dae Sung Industrial and Seoul City Gas Co.

Privatizing PNOC-EC's interest in Malampaya was one of the conditions that the national government set for the state firm in 1999 when it was given full guarantee on a $175-million loan.

Considering the potential of the natural gas project, however, negotiations were conducted between the departments of energy and of finance to consider a compromise that would allow PNOC-EC to fulfill that condition while maintaining some stake in the consortium.

A series of negotiations with then finance secretaries Jose Isidro Camacho and Juanita Amatong yielded the idea of selling just 4.9 percent of the Malampaya stake and not the entire 10 percent.

The sale of the 4.9-percent stake would not only fulfill the condition for the government guarantee but would also raise cash to pare down some of the state firm's debts and finance further oil and gas exploration efforts.

"PNOC-EC can sell down its interest to pay down the debt that it borrowed in 1999 and to fulfill its condition of the national government's national guarantee. But it will also retain 5.1 percent, which will allow it to continue to benefit from the upside potential of owning an interest in th Malampaya consortium," former Energy Secretary Vincent Perez had said in an earlier interview.

BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

Makati City, Metro Manila

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

April 7, 2005

To The Stockholders:

Pursuant to Article IV of the Amended By-Laws of the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of BPI will be held at the Grand Ballroom, Hotel Inter-Continental, Makati City, Metro Manila, on Thursday, 07 April 2005, at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Calling of Meeting to order.
2. Certification of Notice.
3. Determination and Declaration of Quorum.
4. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Stockholders on March 25, 2004.
5. Reading of Annual Report and approval of the Bank's Statement of Condition as of 31 December 2004 incorporated in the Annual Report.
6. Approval and Confirmation of all Acts during the past year of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and all other Board and Management Committees and Officers of BPI.
7. Election of 15 Members of the Board of Directors.
8. Election of External Auditors and Fixing their Remuneration.
9. Directors' Bonus.
10. Other Matters.

In accordance with Article XII of the said By-Laws, the Stock and Transfer Book of BPI will be closed from March 8, 2005 to April 7, 2005. Only Stockholders of record as of March 8, 2005 will be entitled to notice and to vote at the said meeting.

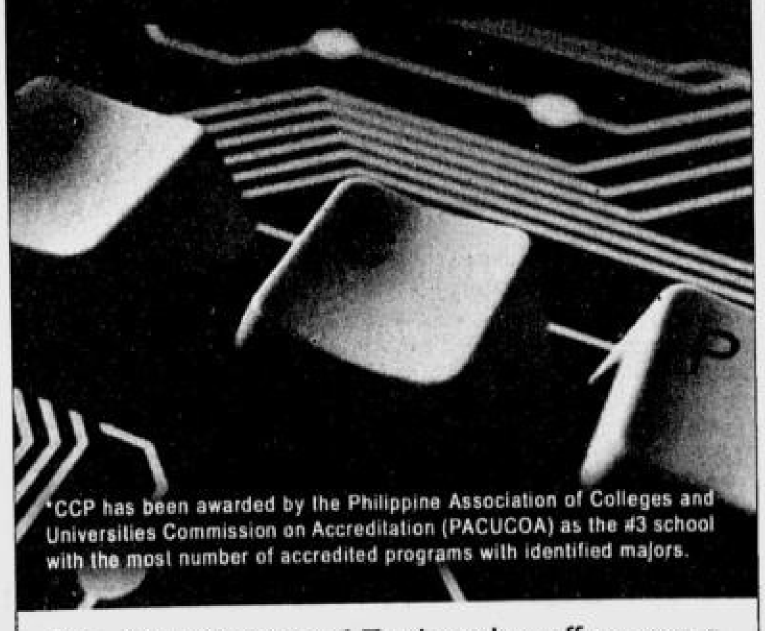
If it will be inconvenient for you to attend the meeting, you may at your option, appoint another person to represent you thereat by means of a proxy, which should be submitted to the Office of the Corporate Secretary of BPI, 19th Floor, BPI Building, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas, Makati City, Metro Manila, not later than 5:00 P.M. of March 28, 2005. Validation of proxies shall be held at the same office on March 30, 2005 at 4:00 P.M.

When signing as attorney-in-fact, executor, administrator, guardian, or in any other representative capacity, please give full title and file papers showing your authority.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
(Sgd.) CARLOS B. AQUINO
Vice President &
Corporate Secretary

Enroll Now at the Central Colleges of the Philippines College of Engineering.

Be part of our legacy.



*CCP has been awarded by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) as the #3 school with the most number of accredited programs with identified majors.

The CCP College of Engineering offers you a rewarding and challenging educational experience by giving its students up to date tools and technologies to develop their professional skills.

Its renowned history of engineering education began with educators from the Philippines top Institutes of Technology and continues on today at the Central Colleges of the Philippines.

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US Fed raises key rate for 7th time, cites risks

WASHINGTON—The Federal Reserve raised a key US interest rate a quarter percentage point to 2.75 percent on Tuesday, conceding inflation risks were growing but expressing confidence gradual rate rises can contain prices.

The central bank's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee voted unanimously to raise the benchmark federal funds rate—which affects credit costs throughout the economy—for a seventh straight time since the current rate-rise campaign began last June.

The Fed said it could keep raising short-term borrowing costs at a "measured" pace, implying further modest quarter-point increases instead of larger ones financial markets had begun to brace for.

But with a subtle shift in wording, policy-makers made clear they were not complacent about prices and gave themselves leeway to act swiftly if necessary.

"Though longer-term inflation expectations remain well-contained, pressures on inflation have picked up in recent months and pricing power is more evident. The rise in energy prices, however, has not notably fed through to core consumer prices," the Fed said.

"With appropriate monetary policy action, the upside and downside risks to the attainment of both sustainable growth and price stability should be kept roughly equal," read the statement outlining the central bank's decision, which also increased the largely symbolic discount rate to 3.75 percent.

Bond and stock prices sagged as the Fed stiffened its commitment to keep prices steady.

Prices for 30-year US Treasury bonds fell more than a full point while yields, which move in the opposite direction, climbed to 4.91 percent.

Prices for 10-year notes fell 30/32s of a point and the yield rose to 4.65 percent, the highest since last July.

Investors interpreted the Fed statement as more hawkish about inflation, implying a higher risk of faster increases in credit costs which sapped hopes for rising corporate profits.

DAMON Federighi shouts orders in the euro dollar futures pit following the federal funds interest rate announcement March 22 at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. AP

The Dow Jones industrial average tumbled 94.88 points, or 0.90 percent, to end at 10,470.51.

The Nasdaq Composite Index fell 18.17 points, or 0.91 percent, and finished at 1,989.34.

Before the decision, financial markets had been particularly focused on how the Fed characterized its expectations for future policy movements and some economists had thought policy-makers could drop the "measured" pledge.

The economy's steady advance since the 2001 recession has gained pace in recent quarters. This has fanned fears of building inflation pressures, especially in view of soaring prices for housing, commodities and energy.

David Kelly, a senior economist with Putnam Investments in Boston, said the Fed likely was hoping to avoid larger rate rises but may have had to nod to the prospect because some FOMC members are more worried than others about getting behind on rates and letting inflation get a toehold.

The Fed noted that economic output was still gaining solidly and that job markets were improving, a sign of its optimism that the expansion remains on solid ground.

Some analysts believe gross domestic product, or GDP, will grow at an annual rate faster than 4 percent in the first quarter. A final reading on fourth-quarter performance is due out next week and also is expected to come in at about 4 percent, up from last month's estimated 3.8 percent rate.

In testimony to Congress in mid-February, Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan described rates as still "fairly low," signaling no letup in a drive to push them to a "neutral" level, one that neither hinders growth nor fosters inflation.

When the Fed began its gradual tightening cycle last June, overnight rates stood at a 1958 low of 1 percent. Even after seven increases, the central bank on Tuesday still dubbed them "accommodative," code meaning that they must go higher.

Economists say a neutral Fed rate lies somewhere from 3 to 5 percent but policy-makers have been loath to talk specifics.

Job growth picked up in February, with the government reporting that US employers hired 262,000 workers for the best gain in four months.

So far, though, wage increases have been very modest—a key factor for tamping down inflation.

Some analysts think the Fed could pause in its rate-rise campaign around mid-year, taking time to assess incoming economic data, but then resume the drive to lift the federal funds rate to around 4 percent by year's end. *Reuters*

VISITORS rush to queue up at Japan's Toyota pavilion during a preview of the Aichi Expo 2005 in Nagakute, Aichi prefecture, March 20. Central Japan's Aichi region, cradle of the samurai and silent force of the nation's economy, is set to be under a rare global spotlight that can help it grow even further by hosting the World Exposition which opens March 25. AFP

Japan trade surplus shrinks

TOKYO—Japan's trade surplus shrank in February from a year earlier for the second month in a row as exports to crucial markets such as China weakened, casting doubts over whether the economy was safely out of recession.

The surplus fell 21.7 percent from the same month a year earlier to 1.093 trillion yen ($10.36 billion), government data showed on Wednesday, lower than a median market forecast of 1.35 trillion yen, or a 3.3-percent fall.

Much of the decline, which followed a year-on-year slide of around 60 percent in January, was due to a surge in oil prices that pushed up the overall value of imports, but economists said the tepid growth in exports was the main concern.

"What's worrying is that exports, on a volume basis, are down from year-ago levels, notably those bound for Asia," said Seiji Adachi, senior economist at Deutsche Securities.

In value terms, exports rose 1.7 percent year-on-year in February, led by automobile exports and steel exports, but dramatically less than the double-digit gains seen last year.

Month-on-month, exports fell 5 percent on a seasonally adjusted basis while the surplus rose 7.7 percent.

In volume terms, exports fell 4.2 percent year-on-year, led by a 6.7-percent drop to Europe and 3.6 percent fall to Asia.

Most worrying of all was a year-on-year fall in exports to China by 2.2 percent, the first fall since December 2001, although some economists said this may have been affected by the Lunar New Year falling in February. Exports to the United States rose 6.4 percent.

"Over the last few years, Japan has benefited from exports of capital goods and production goods to China and other Asian neighbors, who in turn exported their products to the rest of the world," Adachi said.

"But this is starting to show signs of breaking down in the last few months."

Exports have been the key source of growth for Japan in the past few years, expanding since the current recovery cycle began in mid-2003.

Although exports account for around 10 percent of the economy, their growth is usually key to future investment and industrial production.

China, including Hong Kong, has been the key market, accounting for a third of the rise in Japanese exports during the course of the expansion, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Revised data have shown Japan's economy grew 0.1 percent in the last three months of 2004, barely emerging from a shallow recession. External demand, or exports minus imports, clipped 0.1 percentage point off growth in October-December.

Weaker global demand for Japan's high-tech electronic goods and parts has been one of the reasons behind the recent slowdown. *Reuters*

Swiss Air flies under Lufthansa's wing

ZURICH—The German airline Lufthansa on Tuesday took over ailing Swiss International Air Lines after major shareholders in the Swiss carrier approved a deal worth up to 310 million euros ($409 million).

Lufthansa and Swiss chief executives Wolfgang Mayrhuber and Christoph Franz signed the deal at a hotel near Zurich's airport.

"Swiss will remain Swiss, even with Lufthansa," Mayrhuber said in a bid to soothe Swiss sensitivities to seeing one of their major companies being taken over.

The agreement was clinched after major Swiss shareholders, led by the Swiss government with its 20.4-percent stake, met Tuesday to approve the takeover by its bigger and healthier German rival.

With Swiss's financial horizon clouded by stiff competition and fuel prices, other key Swiss shareholders, including regional authorities, the Swiss banks UBS and Credit Suisse and Swiss blue chip groups such as Nestlé, Novartis and Roche, also cast aside national pride to back the deal.

"As a member of the Lufthansa group, Swiss will be better placed to assume its role in linking Switzerland to the rest of the world over the long term," Franz said earlier.

Mayrhuber said Lufthansa's customers would benefit from more destinations, more connections, and improved service.

"The merger of our two companies is not only positive for Switzerland and Germany but also for our partners in Star Alliance. It reinforces European air transport," he added.

Federal and local authorities along with Swiss businesses owned 86 percent of the airline, having invested more than two billion Swiss francs under a national rescue package put together after the former flag carrier Swissair went bankrupt in 2001.

Trading in the Swiss' shares was suspended on Tuesday at the company's request.

The airline's share price had closed at 9.6 Swiss francs Friday, equivalent to barely one tenth of its value when the airline was launched.

Lufthansa said it expected to pay between 45 million and about 300 million euros for Swiss as the deal—the full cost of which will depend on the German airline's share performance—is gradually rolled out until 2008.

Switzerland's government said it had accepted Lufthansa's offer, even though it represented only a fraction of its investment, because other strategies would have put jobs at risk.

It said it believes "the alliance between Swiss and Lufthansa provides the best long-term conditions for keeping an intercontinental airline based in Switzerland, and maintaining air transport infrastructure and jobs."

The Federal Council, the chief executive authority, also insisted in a statement that it would not have been able to afford forthcoming investments of several hundred million Swiss francs to upgrade equipment and aircraft.

Pilot unions said they believed the deal was the only chance to save the airline.

Lufthansa and Swiss revealed publicly for the first time on March 14 that they were in "constructive" takeover talks, following months of speculation about secret meetings between company executives. *AFP*

Fed move drags SE Asia stocks

SINGAPORE—Most Southeast Asian stock markets traded flat to lower on Wednesday with banks leading losses in Singapore and Indonesia after the US Federal Reserve said it may raise interest rates aggressively to tame inflation.

By 0427 GMT, Singapore's Straits Times index was down 1.23 percent, Indonesian stocks had fallen 0.54 percent and Thai shares were off 0.02 percent.

Malaysian shares edged 0.02 percent higher.

The Philippines' market, which ended at a 1-month low on Tuesday, was closed for the Easter holidays, reopening on Monday.

Analysts said aggressive US rate hikes would dampen foreign investors' risk appetite for emerging market assets, already waning after a recent surge in US bond yields.

The Fed on Tuesday raised its key rate by an expected 25 basis points, but its wording on inflation pressures raised speculation of faster rate hikes, sending US 10-year Treasury yields soaring to near 9-month highs.

Vincent Khoo, head of research at Hwang DBS Vickers in Kuala Lumpur, said foreign investors across Southeast Asia have been pulling out of stocks that had had a good run in recent months.

Singapore's DBS Group Holdings fell almost 2 percent and United Overseas Bank and Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp. were both down 1.4 percent.

Dealers said that with Singapore's 10-year benchmark bond yield edging closer to last week's 5-month high, investors were worried about banks' narrowing lending margins.

In Indonesia, Bank Rakyat fell 4 percent and Bank Danamon dropped almost 3 percent.

Dealers in Jakarta said foreign investors were leading the sell-off with banks coming under pressure as most are perceived to be rich in terms of valuations.

In Malaysia, property stocks led losses with IGB Corp. slumping about 12 percent after the book closure in a capital reduction exercise, dealers said.

The Thai market has been weighed down by net selling from foreign investors and after the government on Tuesday announced a sharp rise in domestic diesel prices, heightening concerns over economic growth and domestic demand.

Telecom firm Advanced Info Service fell almost 1 percent and energy firm Thai Oil fell 0.8 percent. *Reuters*

World employment on the rise, say business owners

EMPLOYMENT figures worldwide look encouraging, according to the latest research from Grant Thornton's 2005 International Business Owners Survey (IBOS).

The survey covered 6,000 business owners in 24 countries, who were asked whether they had increased or decreased their workforce in the past year. Globally the workforce balance figure has moved from +8 in 2004 to +26.

More business owners in India (+55) and Australia (+50) said they had seen an increase in their workforce, while those in the Netherlands (-12), Mexico (-3) and Sweden (-2) are the only ones to say they had seen a decrease. Regionally, Nafta leads the way with a balance of +37, followed by East Asia (+17) with EU countries trailing with a balance of +6.

While business owners say employment figures are up, they also say that the shortage of skilled workers is a big constraint on business expansion. Twenty-eight percent of business owners say that the availability of a skilled workforce is a major constraint with those in New Zealand (50 percent), Russia (45 percent) and Australia (44 percent) feeling this most acutely.

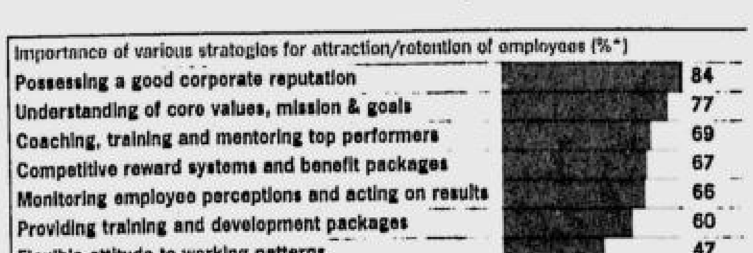
In this tightening labor market, half of all business owners say they have become more focused on attracting and retaining staff in the last year. Highest results come from the Philippines where 92 percent said they were more focused, India (80 percent), Mexico (75 percent) and South Africa (71 percent). In other countries where skill shortages are acute, like Australia and New Zealand, there has also been a greater focus on attracting and retaining staff with 65 percent and 66 percent, respectively.

In countries like Singapore, Italy, France and Germany where the lack of workforce skills is not seen as a serious constraint, the proportion of respondents focusing more on attraction and retention of staff is quite low.

Andrew Godfrey, head of international and European services of Grant Thornton, says: "The lack of availability of a skilled workforce reflects strengthening demand and a tightening labor market in many countries, consistent with the upward phase of the economic cycle. It is not surprising in this climate that we are also seeing a renewed vigor in attracting and retaining staff. In India and South Africa where there is a healthy economic environment, this need is particularly acute. However, the converse applies in Singapore and some European countries like Italy and France where workforce skills are not seen as such a big issue."

IBOS 2005 also asked business owners about factors they thought were important in attracting and retaining staff. A good corporate reputation tops the list with 84 percent believing it was a very important factor, followed by an understanding of core values, mission and goals (77 percent) and training (69 percent).

Grant Thornton International is one of the world's leading accounting and consulting firms. Punongbayan & Araullo is the member firm of Grant Thornton in the Philippines.



* % of respondents rating this 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 when 1 is of little importance and 5 is extremely important

Change in the number of people employed in the past year (%balance*)

India	55
Australia	50
New Zealand	43
South Africa	43
Turkey	39
US	39
Canada	38
Philippines	32
Ireland	29
Taiwan	27
Global Average	26
UK	24
Singapore	18
Japan	15
Greece	14
Russia	12
Hong Kong	11
Spain	11
Poland	6
France	4
Italy	1
Germany	0
Sweden	-2
Mexico	-3
Netherlands	-12

*FIGURES ARE THE %BALANCE BETWEEN THE PROPORTION OF BUSINESSES INDICATING AN INCREASE AND THOSE INDICATING A DECREASE

SOURCE: GRANT THOMPTON INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OWNERS SURVEY 2005

Super Ferry travel tips

SUMMER is here and everybody's going out of town. If you haven't traveled for a long time, you might want to check out the following Happy Trip Travel Tips from SuperFerry.

Prepare yourself. Rest well the day before you travel. To avoid dizziness, take medicine at least an hour before scheduled departure and bring extra medicine. Familiarize yourself with the different amenities onboard, pay attention to announcements, observe safety demonstration, and know your exits.

Always have your ticket ready for inspection. Remember to eat at the designated dining saloon and do not loiter.

When purchasing your ticket, always bring a valid ID when buying tickets, especially if you avail of any discount. Be sure to check all information in the ticket before leaving the counter and secure your tickets. Lost Ticket is lost. If it happens, call SuperFerry Customer Care Hotline (632) 528-7000 to tag the ticket as lost.

Want to re-book your trip to another date? Check any on-line outlet, there is a revalidation fee and fare difference if you choose a new destination.

Pregnant women with less than six months due are required to present a medical certificate when purchasing ticket. Those over six months will be denied boarding regardless of waiver or certificate.

On the day of your departure, save yourself from traffic on the road and baggage checks. SuperFerry requests their passengers to be at the pier at least four hours prior to time of departure. All vehicles entering the Manila South Harbor will be thoroughly checked. Greeters and well-wishers are not allowed at the terminal premises. During peak season (March 15 to June 15 and Dec. 15 to Jan. 15), a closing time of 15 minutes before departure will be imposed. Management may refuse boarding after closing time. Again, secure your tickets and be cautious of pickpockets.

Before boarding, be alert and listen to announcements. Remember, a valid ID must also be presented upon boarding for verification. Passengers with infants or children 0 to 3 years old but below one meter in height are required to secure a Minor's pass obtained at the pier. Only ticketed passengers may proceed to canopy area for baggage inspection. Express lane canopy, regardless of destination, are only for those who have maximum of two boxes or bags, pregnant women below six months, minors, elderly, and disabled.

Know what's inside your baggage for your own protection. Allowable free on board baggage limit on "Regular" fare rates is 0.4cbm or two Balikbayan boxes and 0.8cbm or four Balikbayan boxes on "Promo" fare rates. Secure quarantine permit for plants and animals. Be considerate with others, place animals in a proper cage and don't bring them to your area. There is a designated place for them. Don't bring flammable liquids and solids, corrosive materials, toxic and infectious substances, compressed gases, radioactive materials, and explosives. Guns must have permits or else you will be arrested.

There are baggage handlers and port services at all piers. Warn porters for breakable items to make sure they remain intact.

Check your baggage before boarding and disembarking; you don't want to leave anything behind.

SuperFerry always strives for excellence and new standards in the local marine industry. It is the first shipping company in the Philippines to have received the International Ship Management Code Certification for its quality on safety management, environmental protection, emergency preparedness, maintenance of ship requirements, qualified and well-trained crew, and development plans for shipboard operations.

BANTAY BATA

MAYBANK DONATES TO ABS-CBN SAGIP KAPAMILYA FUND

Maybank Philippines continues to show its support to the ABS-CBN Sagip Kapamilya project by making a 2nd round of donations in aid of the many families ravaged by the two super typhoons that hit Quezon and Aurora last December 2004. The donation was equivalent to a half day earnings pledged by Maybank officers and staff, and taken from the cash conversion of their unused sick leaves for calendar year 2004. In practice, unused sick leaves are converted into cash the following year and given back to the employee as additional earning. This time, some 300 Maybankers volunteered to donate a half day of their total unused sick leave credits to a good cause, in support of the Innovative Idea Proposal made by bank officer Laily Malimban. A simple turnover at the ABS-CBN Foundation Office was made by Maybank corporate affairs head Noli A. Ortiz (right) with PR/branding officer Deng H. Castro (left) and idea proponent Mr. Malimban. On hand to accept the donation is Sagip Kapamilya project director Tina Monzon-Palma, who also heads the Bantay Bata 163 Program of the ABS-CBN Foundation. Maybank Philippines is a member of the Maybank Group, Malaysia's largest banking group and among Asia's Top 20 banks. With this simple gesture, Maybank Philippines continues the tradition of the Group's involvement in bringing cheer to the less fortunate and participating in community/outreach projects.

Summer's best hot shots

WITH the heat intensely blazing, now's the ideal time to escape the relentless and scorching feel brought by the blistering hot summer season.

Have fun at the beach or go white water rafting with family and friends. Summertime is indeed a perfect time to flee from it all - traffic, pollution and the heat - and go on cool vacation and capture memorable moments with your new digital still cameras, which can be yours for taking only at Automatic Centre and Sogo Home & Office Center's 'Summer Hotshots' promo.

As the pioneering dealers of the latest and innovative appliances and gadgets, our chain of stores give customers the chance to find the excellent and perfect buys from a wide variety of sleek, gleaming, top-notch digital cameras - the best buddy showcase for summer runaways.

Available in all Automatic Centre and Sogo branches this season, Summer Hot Shots entitles customers to amazing treats for every purchase of digital cameras, which include zero percent (0%) interest for major credit cards or huge discounts or exciting free items. With these budget-friendly and fabulous offers, customers have all the options to capture every glitz and glamour moment of summer.

Visit Automatic Centre and Sogo Home & Office Center branches nearest you and discover how to cool down this hot summer season. You will definitely get everything you need all at one place. For inquiries, please call 758-2552 or 758-2553.

CHED NCR DIRECTOR MOTIVATES STUDENTS

Ched NCR director IV Dr. Amelia Biglete (middle) receives a plaque of appreciation from GCIC president Michael Tan (left) and GCIC College of Nursing dean Ma. Lourdes Pajaro (right) for being their guest of honor in a capping ceremony held recently at the Sanctuario de San Antonio Church in Forbes Park, Makati. GCIC has grown into one of the most promising educational institutions in the country today and is recognized as having one of the best nursing programs with its international standards and world-class teaching facilities.

Volvo Roadside Assistance

IN ITS continued dedication to clients, Volvo will once again provide Holy Week Roadside Assistance from March 22 to 26. With a service team stationed at the Volvo Makati Showroom and at Camp John Hay, Baguio City, Volvo owners can rest assured that any car trouble they might meet on the road will not be a problem. The Volvo Roadside Assistance Team will be ready, willing and able to respond to their vehicle concerns by calling the Roadside Assistance hotlines: Baguio — 0927-2225619; 0915-5596293; Makati — 0919-3193545; 0917-8238746; Makati landline — 894-2414; 894-2417.

Other services that they can avail themselves of are oil change, repair, brake check, tune-up and free engine diagnostics of their Volvo vehicle. Volvo always has the safety and convenience of its valued clients in mind. Roadside assistance in this season of lent is just one of the ways clients is assured of the total Volvo experience of safety, quality and customer care.

In Manila, Viking Cars Inc is the official distributor of Volvo cars. The Volvo Makati office, showroom and after sales service center are located at 2272 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City, while Volvo Ortigas Center is located at 88 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. The 2005 Volvo automobile line includes the all-new S40 compact sedan and V50 sportswagon, the sporty S60, the flagship S80 luxury sedan, the rugged Cross Country and the all-new XC90 AWD. For details and inquiries, call 893-6621 to 22 (Makati showroom) or 637-0414 to 15 (Ortigas showroom).

Easter Bunnies run loose at Power Plant Mall

THE POWER Plant Mall at Rockwell Center will turn this coming Easter into a fun-filled event with an exciting line-up of activities. And with Power Plant's beloved Easter tradition, kids are sure to go crazy over the cute and cuddly bunnies to be given away.

To avail yourself of this special treat, children with ages 1 to 12 years simply need to make a P1,000 single purchase at any Power Plant Mall establishment. By presenting your receipt during the early registration period from March 16 to 25 to the customer care desk, you automatically entitle your child to one color-coded ticket. On Easter Sunday itself, your child can claim one free ride of his or her choice at the Kiddie Carnival and participation in the Easter Egg Hunt that starts at 11 a.m. and lasts until 2 p.m. Plus, the freebie of all freebies: color-coded ticket holders get a slice of the best part of Power Plant Mall's Easter tradition: a cute and cuddly bunny to call their own.

At 3 p.m., also on Easter Sunday, The Rockwell Tent at the Plaza will be a venue for classic circus entertainment filling every child's heart with gladness through magic and a dog and monkey show. Activity booths will provide special treats like balloon twisting, face painting, a caricaturist, kiddie salon, glitter and henna tattoo, Color–Me-Mine and egg painting.

Adding to the fun is the Kiddie Carnival that will open its doors on March 27 (Easter Sunday itself) until after the summer season. A good enough reason to take the little tykes out for a jump in the inflatables, get on a pony in the carousel and take a ride on the train and Convoy Race.

One need not worry about filling the tummy as food booths will be located right at the Plaza Garden, which is just a stone's throw away from where all the Easter fun at the Power Plant Mall will happen.

TRIPARTITE MOA SIGNED

After almost five years, the Tripartite Memorandum of Agreement on Advertising Suppliers Association of the Philippines (Asap) Trade Contract Terms, embodying the standards of business practice between advertisers, advertising agencies and advertising suppliers was signed last Dec. 6, at the Dusit Hotel by representatives from the country's three major advertising associations: Asap, Pana and the 4A's. Joining the signing are 2005 Asap's chair Khalil Khodr and president Edgar Navalta, 2005 AdBoard and Pana representative Raul Alvarez, 4A's representatives Matic Villanueva and Susan Dimacali. Also in photo are Asap's representatives Jose Sy, Dodie Lucas, Meryl Schlachterman, Alvin Manacsa and Salomon Malca.

ProductFILES

Pizza Hut Seafood Pesto Pizza

INTRODUCING the Seafood Pesto Pizza from Pizza Hut. Another delectable innovation to satisfy its pizza lovers, the Seafood Pesto Pizza is a medley of shrimps and squids, with a generous serving of mushrooms and basil over a rich succulent bed of mozzarella and pesto sauce. Share this seafood Lenten treat at Pizza Hut with family and friends for only P249 (regular size) and P389 (family size). Available at all Pizza Hut restaurants nationwide until April 11. For Metro Manila delivery, call 911-11-11 now.

Seafood catch at Mocha Blends

KNOWN for its array of coffee, beverage and food preparations, Mocha Blends, in observance of the Lenten season, recommends its seafood specials namely: Tuna Melt - spicy tuna filling with chopped cucumber, tomatoes, melted cheese on ciabatta bread and served with chips; Daing na Bangus – Pinoy's all time favorite, a meal specially marinated with special spices and fried to perfection, keeping its juiciness/flavor; and Creamy Crab on Toast - rich in texture and style, this sandwich served with chips is filled with crab slices, cream cheese, yogurt and a selection of spices that makes this humble filling special. All meals are served with a choice of Mocha Blends's Black Café Italiano or House Blend Iced Tea. Enjoy these Lenten specials at Mocha Blends. Now with 34 branches over Metro Manila, North Luzon and South Luzon. Visit their website www.mochablends.com.

SAFE SEA
FREE
FREE FRE

Save with Godiva Safe Sea

SAVE your skin from sunburn and stings, and save P75 with the new Godiva Safe Sea Sunblock bundling promo. Just buy any of the two variants of Godiva Safe Sea which comes with free Godiva Whitening Bath Soap at Watson, Mercury Drug, Gaisano, PCX, and Robinson. Godiva Safe Sea is the only sunblock lotion that protects against jellyfish and "kati-kati" stings. Now you can look forward to a worry-free beach vacation with Godiva Safe Sea.

Bits & Clips

Chili's Easter Sunday fun

COME together at Chili's for a fun-filled Easter Sunday celebration. On March 27, get ready to be served with a good time. Chili's Grill and Bar Restaurant has prepared a fun day for kids. To start it off, an Easter Egg hunt will keep these young fellows exploring the area for concealed eggs. Stuffed bunnies will be given away as prizes. Kids will also get Easter eggs with either candies or smoothies inside. Offer is good only while supplies last. At Chili's, good food and a good time are served all the time. Chili's Greenhills and Chili's Morato will be open on Maundy Thursday and Black Saturday.

Pre-schoolers workshop

PROMIL Pre-School invites parents with children ages 3 to 7 to enroll in Camp Pro-Gifted - a series of workshops designed to nurture a pre-schooler's gift in arts and crafts, reading, acting, singing and dance. Registration for Camp Pro-Gifted is on March 27, at the Fountain Area of Market! Market!, Fort Bonifacio, Global City. The Camp runs from April 4 to May 28. Each workshop is facilitated by highly trained, publicly recognized experts. Promil Pre-School organizes the camp as it recognizes the importance of pre-school years, when a child first shows signs of giftedness. ProGifted campers will showcase their special talents in a culminating activity at SM Megamall on May 28. Registration fee is P3,500 but participants may avail of the discounted rate of P2,000 by presenting (1) Promil Pre-School 1.6 kg can, (2) 900 g can or (4) 400 g cans. Registration is on a first come, first served basis. For inquiries call Krystin A. Bernardez from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Monday to Friday at 892-0116.

Manila Hotel Easter treat

CELEBRATE Easter Sunday at Manila Hotel on March 27. Let your kids have fun and excitement as they hunt for Easter eggs and watch clowns and magicians or participate in games and later on join them as they feast on sumptuous buffet while watching an animated movie. For ticket reservations, call the Manila Hotel at 527-0011 extensions 1251 and 1254

THE OUTSTANDING YOUNG MEN (TOYM) ACCEPTS NOMINATIONS

The Outstanding Young Men 2005 (TOYM) is now on its 47th year. It is an annual project of the Philippine Jaycees, a youth organization which aims to contribute to the advancement of the global community by providing young people with the opportunity to develop leadership skills, social responsibility and fellowship for a positive change. TOYM 2005 is co-presented by Equitable PCI Bank, PLDT, Gerry Roxas Foundation and the TOYM Foundation Inc. Nominees must not be more than 40 years old by December 2005. Any private citizen or organization may nominate by filing up the official nomination form with accompanying scrapbooks detailing the achievements of the nominee. For more information call Philippine Jaycees c/o Naysa, Juliet or Rhea at 373-7907 to 09, 374-2495, or pick up nomination forms at #14 Don A. Roces Ave. Q.C. Shown are the 2005 Toym Search Committee (from left): Jocelle Pascual, PR director; Mabel Villarica-Mamba, 2005 TOYM national chair; Rafael 'Boydee' Dizon III, adviser; Gemma Sapnu, awarding chair, Eloisa Laya, member, screening; (standing, from left): Mati San Diego, screening chair; Joel Pascual, TOYM director and adviser; Eric Villamar, finance; Ramfel Preclaro, judging chair.

Aga Khan's Cairo park opens

THE 30-hectare Al-Azhar Park Project, which includes urban revitalization projects in the neighboring Darb al-Ahmar district, will be inaugurated on March 25 by His Highness the Aga Khan. Egypt's capital, with a population of 17 million, has one of the lowest ratios of green space to urban population in the world—an area the size of a footprint per inhabitant, according to one estimate. Al-Azhar Park, therefore, provides much-needed leisure and recreational space while functioning as a "green lung" in the heart of the city. The $30-million project was designed as an agent for economic development. For more information, get in touch with Sam Pickens of the Aga Khan Development Network, PO Box 2049, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland, or call (+41 22) 909-7277, fax (+41 22) 909-7292, e-mail sam.pickens@akdn.ch, or log on to http://www.akdn.org.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reflect, connect this Lenten season with Globe Int'l Services

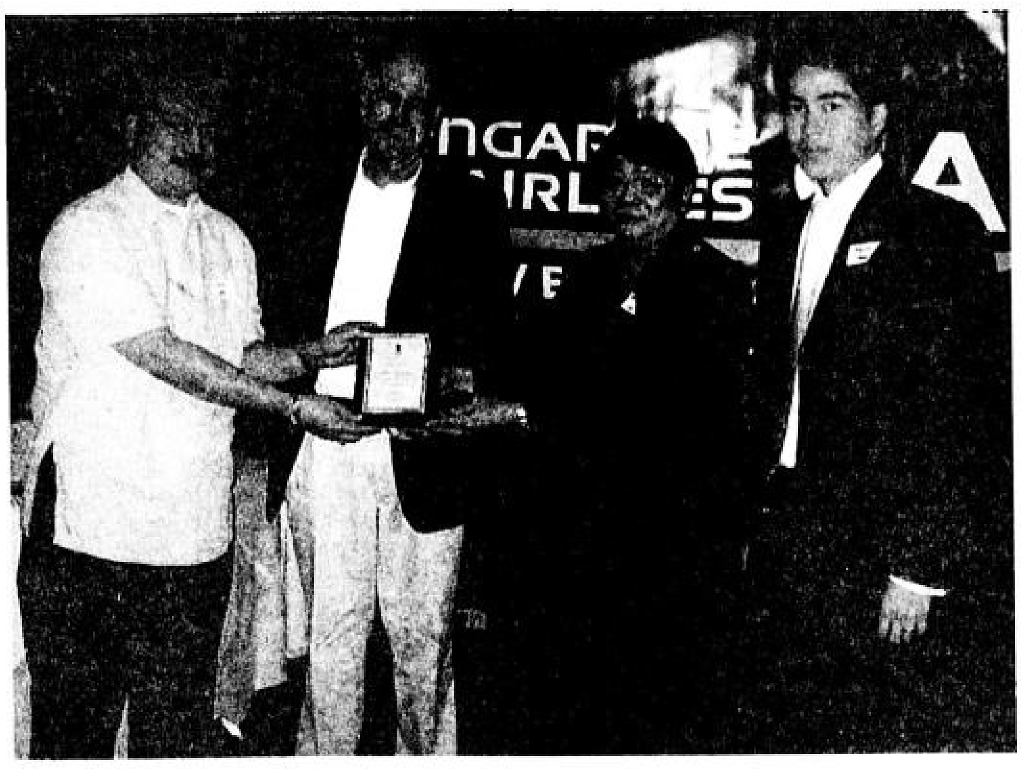
IT HAS become the family's annual tradition to join the Holy Week activities in the province. Not one member of the kin has missed the Santo Entiero procession on Good Friday or the Salubong on the dawn of Easter Sunday, except this year when kuya left to work abroad.

Now, your family can still share the solemnity of the Lenten season even though you are miles apart. With Globe International Services, bringing to life family traditions is more possible than ever.

Wouldn't it be great to be the first one to greet kuya "Happy Easter!" by calling him through Globe's IDD service? For only US 40 cents/min, you can go on and on sharing the fun that the family had during the much-awaited Easter egg hunt.

Globe International Services also lets you send text messages to loved ones abroad for only P10/send on G-Plan and P15/send on Globe Prepaid. Forward to kuya some meaningful messages on the "Seven Last Words" that he can reflect on. You can also send him photo (P20) and video (P40) messages with Globe International MMS if you want him to get the feel of the entire Holy Week activities with snapshots you took using your camera-phone.

As Holy Week is a time for contemplation, it is also the most apt time to bond by cultivating the spirituality of family and friends. Globe's International Services allow you to reach out to loved ones beyond borders and across continents this season, making for a truly joyous and meaningful celebration of Easter.



2GO RECEIVES SINGAPORE AIRLINES AWARD

2GO, the freight brand of Aboitiz, was awarded recently by Singapore Airlines as one of the top agents in a ceremony held at the Manila Polo Club in Forbes Park, Makati City. The award was presented by (2nd from right) Soo Tin Foo, regional VP-SEA, and assisted by Eugene Chew, GM Philippines of Singapore Airlines (right) to (left) Gener Lim, 2GO-logistics COO and Klaus Schroeder, 2GO-logistics CEO and president (2nd from left). 2GO was highly recognized as well by Global Cargo Carriers Inc (GCCI) recently, where the group bagged five platinum awards for its valuable contributions in the industry.

Bunny time at SM Storyland

STORYLAND becomes an "egg-citing" bunny hop as it celebrates Easter with fun shows, games and parties at its SM Southmall and SM City Fairview parks.

"Fun-tasy" is real as kids and the kids-at-heart were treated to a special animal show March 19 and 20. Guests at the Southmall and Fairview parks had the unique experience of watching birds sing, play basketball, dance, go through hoops and obstacles, and talk to the audience. But the fun wasn't strictly for the birds, as the audience also had the chance of learning more about reptiles up close.

Club Storyland members will be celebrating March 27, Easter Sunday, with its annual Clubbie Easter Party. They will be treated to exciting interactive games, cool activities, and fun prizes. Giselle Sanchez will lead the fun at the Southmall park, while Candy Pangilinan will host the event, telling Easter stories and performing song and dance numbers at SM City Fairview. The Clubbie Easter Party begins at 2 p.m.

On the same day, the Storyland Funpark in SM City Cebu will launch its Club Storyland membership and Easter celebration. Great treats await early registrants, who will also enjoy the Club's perks and privileges. Registration starts at 12 noon.

Storyland also has fun parks located at SM City Cebu, SM City Iloilo, and SM City Batangas.

KIDS will have fun with exciting and cool activities at SM Storyland this Easter.

Avon Philippines' breast cancer project wins Gold Quill, Anvil awards anew

FOR the third consecutive year, Avon Philippines' breast cancer project, Kiss Goodbye to Breast Cancer, was honored by two of the country's most prestigious award-giving bodies in the communication and public relations industry.

Avon Phils' Kiss Goodbye to Breast Cancer (KGBC) Art Exhibit/Auction entitled 'Uncovering Life' received top honors in the recent Gold Quill and Anvil Awards presented by the International Association of Business Communications (IABC) and the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP). The milestone art exhibit was awarded the Gold Quill Award of Merit for Community Relations by IABC and Award of Excellence by the PRSP.

The Gold Quill aims to honor achievements of professional communicators by recognizing excellence in communication. Meanwhile, the Anvil Awards is annually conducted by the PRSP to give recognition to outstanding public relations programs and tools that are clearly identified with public interest and have a lasting impact or value. This year's Anvil Awards gave Awards of Excellence to a very select group of 11 corporate program out of almost 60 entries. In 2003, Avon Phils' KGBC Photo Exhibit was also declared the winner of the coveted Bronze Anvil, the highest honor in the Anvil Awards-PR Tools category.

PHOTO shows the proud Avon Philippines team - senior manager Louie Igne, group communications manager Alice Orleans and assistant PR manager Faith Fernandez Aranton - during the Gold Quill Awards.

SHOWN are the victorious Avon Phils receiving their Awards of Excellence at the Anvil Awards. From left: PRSP president Jones Campos, Avon senior manager for public relations Louie Migne, Avon marketing director Kit TiLian, PRSP Anvil Awards board of judges chair and guest of honor Senator Mar Roxas, assistant PR manager Faith Fernandez Aranton, Avon PR consultant Joy Buensalido and PRSP Anvil Awards chair Joel Lacsamana.

Ricoh Philippines greens the earth

IN LINE with its efforts at environmental preservation, Ricoh Philippines recently conducted its first RPH tree-planting activity, in coordination with ABS-CBN's Bantay Kalikasan Foundation. It participated in the "Adopt a Hectare Program", which is a watershed rehabilitation, development and protection project within the La Mesa Watershed.

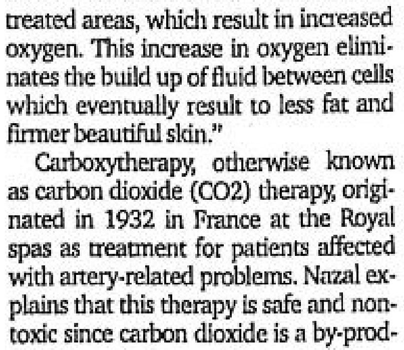
The La Mesa Watershed is the principal source of water for Metro Manila and nearby provinces. Because it experiences continuous destruction, this would have serious repercussions on Metro Manila's water supply. The Adopt a Hectare project aims at reforesting the area to address the environmental concern. Eventually, however, the La Mesa watershed is envisioned to be a huge nature park and bio-diversity reserve.

Composed of 30 Ricoh Philippines employees, including the management and operations committees of the company, the participants engaged in soil potting, watering, spacing and transferring of plants. This half-day event was in preparation for the actual tree-planting period, which will be from June to August.

This tree-planting event is just one of the many environmental efforts that Ricoh Philippines is actively involved in. The company's concern for nature and the destruction of natural resources has led it to embark on serious conservation and preservation efforts. In fact, having met the highest standards at environmental protection in the copier industry, Ricoh Philippines recently received its ISO Certification 14001:2004.

ProductFILES

YSA introduces Carboxytherapy: Non-surgery for cellulite

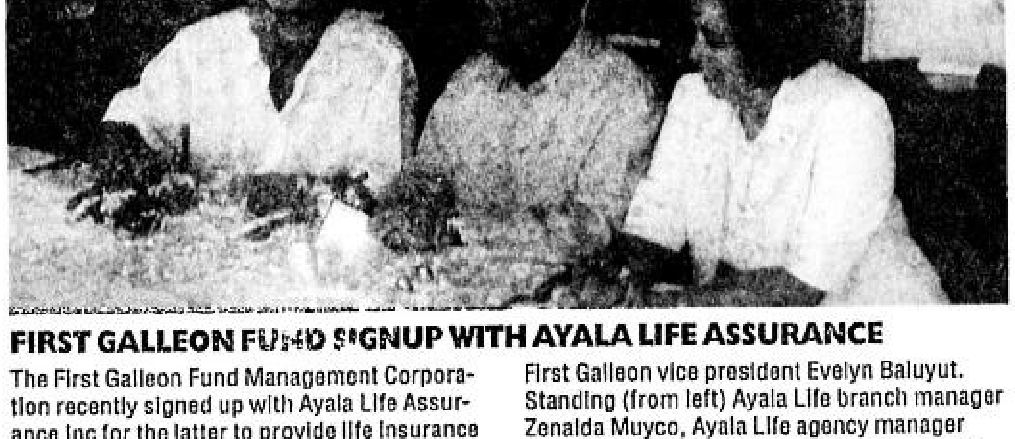


LIVING up to its name as "Your Skincare Authority", YSA Skin Care Center is once again at the forefront of aesthetic treatment with its introduction of the first Carboxytherapy in the Philippines — the latest safe, non-surgical and proven technique to significantly improve cellulite appearance by improving local tissue metabolism and perfusion without the patient's downtime. It is a perfect cellulite treatment for people on the go. Every session lasts for approximately 10 minutes only and requires no restrictions after treatment so you can go right back to your usual activity.

Cellulite, which causes the "dimpling" of the skin mostly on thighs, buttocks, knees and abdomen, has plagued most women regardless of shape and size. Diet and exercise alone do not improve this unsightly condition. Cellulite develops for two reasons. First, our tissue changes as we age — the connective tissue strands thicken while our skin gets thinner. Second and more important, for every decade of an average woman's life, five pounds of muscles are lost and replaced by 15 pounds of fat. Fat takes up more space than muscle, which causes the "cottage cheese" appearance. Unfortunately, the traditional ways for slimming down and shaping up have very little effect on the elasticity of connective tissue fibers under the skin since they are just directed at the muscle groups and fat deposits.

From this understanding of cellulite development, Carboxytherapy acts in two ways. Dr. Isabel Lopez-Nazal explains, "Carboxytherapy kills the fat cells that cause the skin to have the dimpling or saggy appearance. Second, its strong ability to dilate the blood vessels allows more blood to flow to the treated areas, which result in increased oxygen. This increase in oxygen eliminates the build up of fluid between cells which eventually result to less fat and firmer beautiful skin."

Carboxytherapy, otherwise known as carbon dioxide (CO2) therapy, originated in 1932 in France at the Royal spas as treatment for patients affected with artery-related problems. Nazal explains that this therapy is safe and nontoxic since carbon dioxide is a by-product of metabolism and is naturally produced by our bodies every day of our lives. For more information about Carboxytherapy, consult "Your Skincare Authority" at 912-0703 or visit the nearest YSA branch and get to flaunt again those nice legs and body.



FIRST GALLEON FUND SIGNUP WITH AYALA LIFE ASSURANCE

The First Galleon Fund Management Corporation recently signed up with Ayala Life Assurance Inc for the latter to provide life insurance coverage to First Galleon fund members. Present during the signing were : Seated (from left) Ayala Life assistant director Anelisa Merida, First Galleon president Gaizka Garamendi, Ayala Life business director Lauro Abaño and First Galleon vice president Evelyn Baluyut. Standing (from left) Ayala Life branch manager Zenaida Muyco, Ayala Life agency manager Linda Yrastorza, First Galleon manager Annie Tresvalles, Ayala Life agency producer Medy Bantug, First Galleon corporate secretary lawyer Juan Jose Chua, Ayala Life assistant directors Gerry Bumagat and Kevin King.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE ESTATE OF THE LATE JUANITO P. ENCINARES WAS EXTRAJUDICIALLY SETTLED AMONG HIS HEIRS AS PER DOC. NO. 356; PAGE NO. 73; BOOK NO. 81; SERIES OF 2005 UNDER NOTARY PUBLIC ATTY. PATRICIO L. BONCAYAO JR. (PDI MAR.10,17, 24, 2005)

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late MARY PIAMONTE CASTILLO DE GUZMAN was settled by her heirs through an extrajudicial portion acknowledged before Notary Public Raymund Mecate of Silang, Cavite as per Doc. #39, Page 8, Book II, Series of 2005.
(PDI - March 11, 18 & 24, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF THE (A) ELECTRICITY PURCHASE AGREEMENT AND (B) EXTENDED ELECTRICITY PURCHASE AGREEMENT (EPA) ENTERED INTO BY AND BETWEEN ANGELES ELECTRIC CORPORATION (AEC) AND ANGELES POWER, INC. (API), WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC Case No. 2005-010 RC

ANGELES ELECTRIC CORPORATION (AEC),
Applicant
x---x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given of the filing on January 25, 2005 by applicant Angeles Electric Corporation (AEC) of an application for approval of the: a) renewal of the Electricity Purchase Agreement, and b) extension of the Electricity Purchase Agreement, it entered into with Angeles Power, Inc. (API) with prayer for provisional authority docketed as ERC Case No. 2005-010 RC.

The Commission has set the application for hearing on April 22, 2005 at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 AM) at the AEC Main Office, Don Juan D. Nepomuceno Avenue corner Teresa Avenue, Nepomart Complex, Angeles City, Pampanga.

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman and the Honorables **OLIVER B. BUTALID**, **JESUS N. ALCORDO**, **RAUF A. TAN** and **ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN**, Commissioners, Energy Regulatory Commission, this 7th day of March, 2005.

(Sgd.) **FRUCTUOSO C. LAGUNZAD, JR.**
Executive Director III

(PDI – March 24 & April 1, 2005)

PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on 23 February 2005, the share of Mr. Thomas A. Meneses Jr. (Stock Cert. No. 917) in the COUNTRY CLUB AT TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS, INC. was sold at auction to the highest bidder. Accordingly, said stock certificate has been cancelled and will no longer be honored by the club.
(PDI–March 24, 2005)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that PR No. 5537-5550 and OR No. 1447-1450 of Creative Signs, Inc. has been reported lost on Marh 13, 2005. Issuance of these receipts will be null and void.

Notice is hereby given that stock Cert. No. 13534 issued by Union Cement Corp. for 14,599 shares of Mr. Cesar G. Saldana has been reported lost. If no contest received new cert. will be issued.
(PDI-March 10, 17, 24, 2005)

NOTICE OF LOSS
Notice is hereby given that the pair of Plate No. DEP-755 registered in the name of JOSE R. LEGASPI, was lost per Affidavit of Loss dated Feb. 8, 2005 under the Notarial Registry of Atty. Benjamin B. Tabaque as Doc. 375; Page 76; Book 269; Series of 2005
(PDI – March 17, 24 & 31, 2005)

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Notice is hereby given that on 23 February 2005, the share of Mr. Manuel Ang/Edison Yu (Stock Cert. No. 615) in the COUNTRY CLUB AT TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS, INC. was sold at auction to the highest bidder. Accordingly, said stock certificate has been cancelled and will no longer be honored by the club.
(PDI–March 24, 2005)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(Reinsurance for PNOC-EDC's Fire and Allied Perils Policy)

The GSIS-General Insurance Bids and Awards Committee (GIBAC), thru its Technical Working Group (TWG) is inviting qualified local and foreign reinsurance companies/brokers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the renewal of reinsurance for the PNOC-EDC's Fire & Allied Perils Policy for a period of twelve months at May 1, 2005 at 00:01 A.M. Local Standard Time.

Combined Sum Insured : P10,752,663,375.40
Approved Budget : P 241,743,800.00

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Issuance of Eligibility and Bidding Documents	Pre-Bid Conference	Submission and Opening of Eligibility and Bid Envelopes
March 17 to 31, 2005 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM GIBAC Secretariat OSVP-GIG, 5th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd. Pasay City	March 31, 2005 9:00 AM Makati Skyline Restaurant 8th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	April 6, 2005 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM Makati Skyline Restaurant 8th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

That as of bidding date, April 6, 2005, the premium quotation has support of 100% of the 50% reinsurance. The market selected by the broker for the lead reinsurer should have a minimum of "A" rating (Standard & Poor) with the rest of reinsurers having a minimum of "BB" rating as of Dec. 31, 2004, attaching copies of confirmed placement of the reinsurers share on or before the bidding date.

Eligibility and bid documents shall be issued to applicants upon filing of a Letter of Intent to Apply and payment of a non-refundable bidding fee of P10,000.00 in the form of Cash or Manager's check in favor of GSIS.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bid, sufficiency of Bid Security, Post-Qualification, and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of existing laws, rules and regulations. Only applicants who paid bid fees shall be allowed to attend the Pre-Bid Conference and submit Bid proposals.

The GSIS thru the GIBAC reserves the right to reject any and all bids and/or part thereof, or waive any defect contained therein and may accept the offer which it deems the lowest calculated responsive bid.

March 16, 2005, Pasay City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) **ENRIQUETA P. DISUANCO**
GIBAC Chairman

(PDI – March 16 & 24, 2005)

NORTHERN SAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
NORSAMELCO
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INVITATION TO A PRE-QUALIFICATION CONFERENCE AND SEALED BIDDING

Interested parties are hereby invited to a PRE-QUALIFICATION CONFERENCE and SEALED BIDDING for the SUPPLY of the following:

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b.	35 ft/class 4	30	pcs.
2.	Conductor Bare ACSR no. 2	63,837	mtrs.
3.	Anchor Log 8" x 4'	150	pcs.
4.	Transformer, Double Bushing, 13.2/7.62kv / 240v with H.V. tap changer, brand new		
a.	25kva	8	units
b.	15kva	3	units
5.	Various Pole Line Hardware, Hot Dip Galvanized		

Interested bidders are required to submit a letter of intent with latest company profile before securing bid forms. Bid forms will be issued upon payment of One Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (Php1,500.00) non-refundable.

Pre-bid conference is scheduled on March 30, 2005 at 10:00 a.m., NORSAMELCO Conference Room. Only qualified bidders who were present during the pre-qualification conference will be allowed to participate in the bidding.

Opening of bids will be on April 07, 2005. Sealed bid must be accompanied by Bid Security equivalent to 5% of the total bid price in an acceptable form.

The Northern Samar Electric Cooperative, Inc. (NORSAMELCO) hereby reserves the right to reject any or all bids without disclosing any reason, to waive any minor defects or infirmities therein, and to accept such bids as may be deemed advantageous to NORSAMELCO.

(Sgd.) **RAUL S. RAÑOLA**
OIC – General Manager

(PDI – March 24, 27 & 28, 2005)

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NFA fast-tracks harvest operations

THE NATIONAL Food Authority (NFA) is now set to aggressively undertake its palay procurement operations this summer season.

According to NFA administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr., the agency has already prepared its warehouses and post harvest facilities (PHF) nationwide to ensure that local rice farmers will have ready facilities and storehouse for their palay harvests. .

As part of its palay procurement strategies, the NFA has set-up vital palay post harvest facilities at designated offices, which include 326 mechanical dryers, 79 ricemills, 30 graders and 13 rice polishers, to help farmers fast track their harvest operations.

At present, the NFA has a total of 328 warehouses nationwide. These warehouses could store more than 22.3 million bags of palay.

Also, in response to the clamor of numerous farmers' organizations (FOs), the NFA last year has set the support price of palay at a uniform level of P10 per kilogram all year round. An additional P0.50/kg incentive for drying, delivery and cooperative development incentive fund (CDIF) is also granted on top of the support price.

Tan also said that aside from the agency's 530 buying stations strategically positioned in high-palay producing and far-flung areas, the agency also has 110 Municipal Level Grains Centers (MLGCs) and 32 Farm Level Grains Centers (FLGCs) which serve as palay trade sites for farmers and other grains stake holders.

"We want our farmers to gain maximum benefit out of the programs and projects implemented by the government," the NFA chief said.

For further details on NFA procurement operations, interested parties may visit the nearest NFA office or send-in text messages through 0917-6210927.

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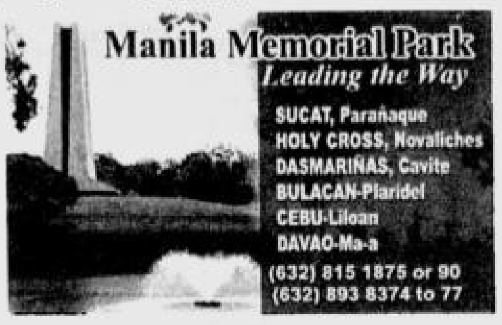
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DASMARIÑAS, Cavite
BULACAN-Plaridel
CEBU-Liloan
DAVAO-Ma-a
(632) 815 1875 or 90
(632) 893 8374 to 77

*"I am the Resurrection and the Life,
He who believes in Me will Live,
even though he dies, and whoever
believes in Me, will never die."*
John 11:25-26

Melanie Ngan Syquiatco

*Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on March 23, 2005 at the age of 38.*

She shall be missed by her bereaved husband Quintin; children Patricia and Patrick, parents, brother and sister, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, other relatives and friends.

Her remains lie in state at Chapel 1, of the Mortuary and Crematory at the Heritage Park

Interment will be on Sunday, March 27, 2005, 9:00am at the Heritage Park, after the 8:00am necrological service.

Mortuary · Crematory
Heritage Park

MA. CORAZON ARAULLO - GOQUINGCO

24 JUNE 1936 - 22 MARCH 2005

HER LOVING FAMILY, HUSBAND VERNON; CHILDREN ABET & ROHEL, TINA & CHITO SANTOS, AND JOEL; GRANDSONS RAPHAEL AND PATRICK; SIBLINGS ALEX (+) & FE ARAULLO, JULIE & NARDING GAMBOA, NENA & ED VILLANO, FANNIE, YENG & ROMY RESURRECCION, VICKY & KEITH LUPTON, LEO & LULU ARAULLO; IN-LAWS WEWE (+) & DING CASTRO, BABY (+) & RENE RIVERA, ALBERT (+) & FLOR GOQUINGCO, BETH & CLINIO TAYAG, AGNES & BONYONG TAYAG, CIRING & BOB RAMOS, SUZETTE & TITO MEDINA, MARILOU & RENE RIVERA, MARILEN GOQUINGCO; NIECES AND NEPHEWS, REQUEST THE PIOUS TO PRAY FOR HER ETERNAL REPOSE, PEACE AND HAPPINESS.

ATE CORA LIES IN STATE AT THE LOYOLA MEMORIAL CHAPELS, SUCAT, PARAÑAQUE CITY.

INTERMENT WILL BE ON EASTER SUNDAY, 27 MARCH 2005 AT THE LOYOLA MEMORIAL PARK, PARAÑAQUE AFTER THE 9:00 AM MASS.

LYDIA A. LIMJOCO REMO

1916 – 2005

Joined her Creator on March 21, 2005.

Husband : **Jose Remo, Sr.** (†); Son: **Jose Remo, Jr.**; Grandson: **Ryan**
Brothers : **Gregorio, Jr.** (†); **Jose** (†), **Francisco** (†), **Ramon** & **Cesar**
Sisters : **ElviraTioseco, Amparo Velarde, Eva Mercado, Aurora Pastor** and **Milagros Aquino**
In-Laws, Nephews, Nieces and their Grandchildren

Request the pious to pray for the eternal repose of her soul. Her remains lie in state at the Holy Cross Memorial, Daly City, San Francisco, CA, USA. Interment will be on Thursday, March 31, 2005.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
— 2 Corinthians 5:8

Ruperto Icamen Pia, Sr.

*Peacefully joined our Lord
on March 21, 2005 at the age of 103*

His beloved wife **Caridad**; children **Isabel** and **Ernesto, Ruperto** (†) and **Aurora, Sam** (†) and **Sally, Angel** and **Amparo, Salvacion** (†), **Lotgarda** and **Ruben, Leon** (†) and **Wilma, Mel** and **Erlinda, Connie, Salvador** and **Amor**; grandchildren and great grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Ernesto & Isabel Yap at Murillo Subdivision, Div., Quiot, Cebu City with telephone # (032) 272-6507.

Interment will be on March 27, 2005, 9:00 a.m. at Cebu Memorial Park.

The Board of Directors
Management and Staff
of Export and Industry Bank, Inc.
regret the untimely demise of Board Member

DIR. HERMENEGILDO C. ZAYCO, JR.

He peacefully joined our Creator
on March 22, 2005
at the age of 85.

His loving children **Eaga** and **Jun Narvaez**, **Sandy** (+) and **Nando Gaspar, Arleen** and **Chito Borromeo, Patty** and **Rene Pascual, Kookie, Nadine** and **Corky Fernandez, Denise, Philip** and **May**, together with his grandchildren and great grandchildren, commend his spirit to the Lord and request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the
Capilla dela Virgen Forbes Parish Center,
Makati City.

Interment will be on Easter Sunday, March 27, 2005.

The Board of Trustees
Management and Staff
of Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. (PHILEXPORT)
mourn the passing away of our beloved

HERMENEGILDO C. ZAYCO, JR.

Vice-Chairman and Board of Trustee for Textile Sector

who has peacefully gone back to his Creator
on March 22, 2005
at the age of 85.

His loving children **Eaga** and **Jun Narvaez**, **Sandy** (+) and **Nando Gaspar, Arleen** and **Chito Borromeo, Patty** and **Rene Pascual, Kookie, Nadine** and **Corky Fernandez, Denise, Philip** and **May**, together with his grandchildren and great grandchildren, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the
Capilla dela Virgen Forbes Parish Center,
Makati City.

Interment will be on Easter Sunday, March 27, 2005.

---

*Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in Me will live,
Even though he dies, and whoever believes in Me will never die."*

Our dearly beloved "Mama Tinding"

MATILDE C. FRANCISCO

*Peacefully joined her Creator on March 18, 2005
in Los Angeles, California U.S.A. at the age of 91.*

Her husband, Col. **Justo N. Francisco** (deceased); her bereaved children **Frine** and **Edgar, Fernando, Renato** and **Rosalinda, Justima** and **Frank** (†) and **Gerardo**; and grandchildren **Monette, Marites, Brian, Genevieve, Kristine, Vanessa** and **Justin James, Marie** and **Men Men** and great grandchildren **William** and **Luis Joaquin** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains will arrive from the United States on March 25, 2005 and will lie in state at the Christ the King Church, Greenmeadows Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches, Quezon City after the 8:00 a.m. Mass on March 27, 2005.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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'KUTSINTA' and other indulgences /C3

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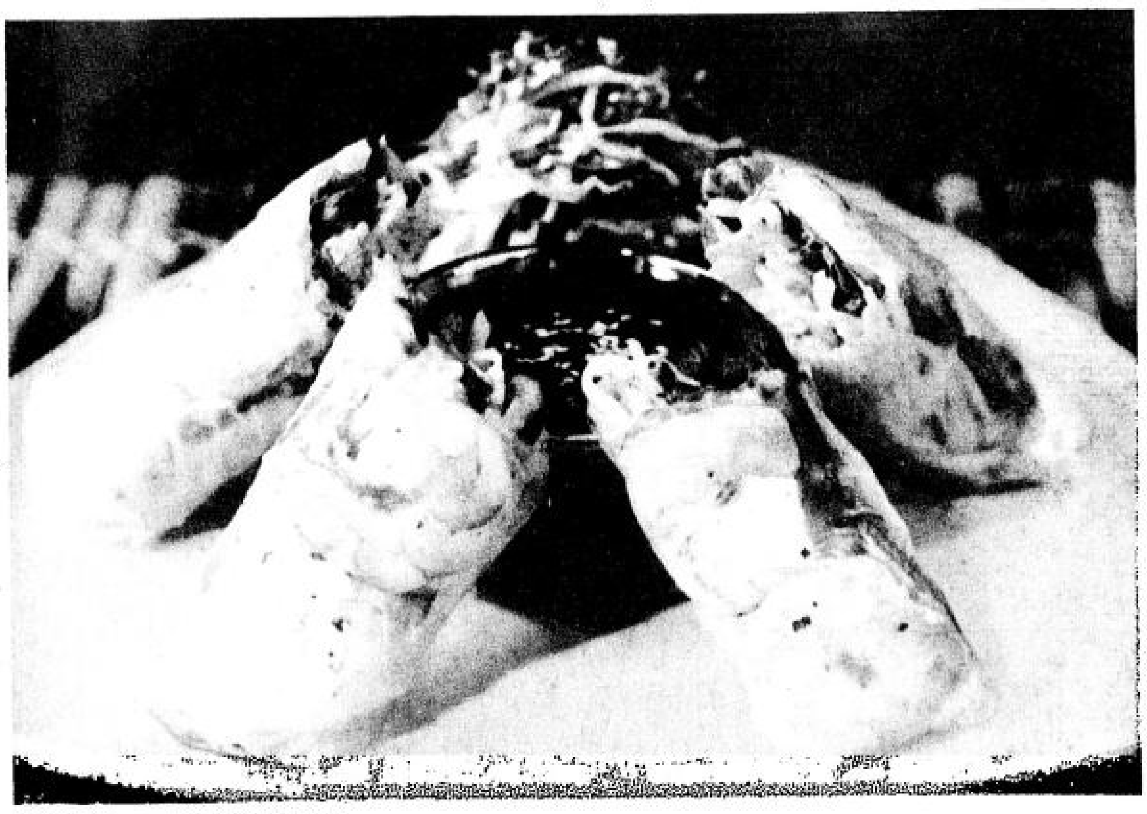
or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**



CPK's Singapore Shrimp Rolls

CHINESE Monk offers a wide array of seafood and vegetable dishes this Holy Week, including (clockwise from left) Vegetable Stuffed Tofu, Fish and Tofu Hotpot, Szechuan Prawns and Seafood Crispy Noodles. Buy any three and get a free dish.

What's on the menu for Lenten season

DINING OUT

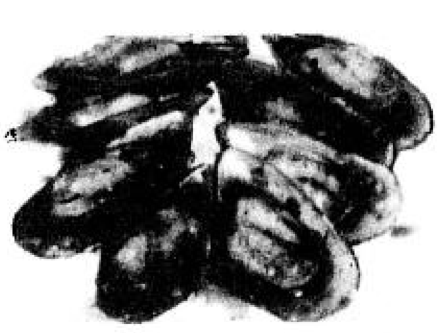
CALIFORNIA Pizza Kitchen offers special dishes for Lent: Grilled Garlic Shrimp Pizza, The Tuna Melt Pizza, Singapore Shrimp Rolls, and Tuna and Greens Salad. The CP-Kids Club will hold an eggs-travagant Easter party on March 27 at all branches in Glorietta 3, Alabang Town Center, Shangri-La Mall and Tomas Morato. To be showcased are beautifully decorated pizza boxes by CPKids members. The pizza box with the most number of votes from CPK diners will win special prizes. The Easter Egg Hunt offers treats and the CPKids Meal afterwards. Call CPK Glorietta 3 at 8939898/9999; Alabang Town Center at 8505771/6752; Shangri-La Mall at 6877841/42; Tomas Morato at 3727371/72.

MARIO'S Kitchen has whipped up special dishes for Holy Week. Try the hot and crunchy Fish Fillet with Caesar Salad, Bacalao a la Vizcaina, Bangus Belly with Guinataang Kangkong and Salpicon de Mariscos. Mario's Kitchen has two branches: 2/F, Robinsons Place Ermita (Pedro Gil Wing) and G/F, Metrowalk. Call 3020195 and 6384140.

UCC has all-time favorite desserts, including Blueberry Cheesecake, Tiramisu, Apple Crumb Pie a la Mode and Choco Fudge Cake, to end a Japanese fusion meal. UCC is on Tomas Morato, QC; Connecticut Street, Greenhills; The Podium, Ortigas Center; Forbes Town Center, Taguig City; and Paseo Center, Makati City. Soon to open is the UCC Westgate Center, Alabang.

GENKI launched recently affordable set meals including the Executive Meal Packages for the budget-conscious, Teppanyaki Set Meals for teppanyaki lovers and the Sumo Meals. Ranging from P185-P305, the meals come with soup, salad, appetizer, drink and dessert. Genki is located at Sunshine Boulevard Plaza, 1328 Quezon Ave. corner Scout Santiago and Panay Ave., QC. Call 3745500/3751768.

BLUE Bacon and Green Eggs Restaurant offers a sizzling new delight this summer. Grilled Marinated French Cut Rack of Lamb is served with Garlic Rice and Buttered Fresh Asparagus. The restaurant is at 27 Lantana corner Boston St., Cubao, QC. Call 7268054/7212717/ 7212714.



SUPER Bowl of China's Mussels with Black Bean Sauce, freshly cooked mussels with slightly spicy *taosi*

SUPER BOWL of China offers an array of new dishes to mark Easter for a limited time only. The lineup includes Hunan Beef, Kung Pao Chicken, Steamed Salmon with Plum Sauce, Mussels with Black Bean Sauce, Crab with Spicy Pepper, Crab with Sotanghon Hot Pot and Fish Fillet with Eggplant Hot Pot. Super Bowl of China branches are at all major malls. Soon to open are branches on Tomas Morato, Quezon City; and Blue Wave, Marikina. Call 7472048 for catering and 7378888 for delivery.

KITARO has three new chicken dishes. Try the improved Chicken Teriyaki, chicken slices marinated and cooked with smokey hickory flavor; and Chicken Furai, breaded chicken strips drizzled with tonkatsu sauce, for P98 each. Chicken Katsu Curry Rice, P135, has breaded chicken strips on rice smothered with mild curry sauce with chunks of carrots and potatoes. Kitaro has branches in Walter Mart Pasong Tamo, Robinsons Pioneer Place, East Avenue QC, Manila Plaza on C.M. Recto Ave., Bridgeway Food Court in Medical City, Tagaytay City and Berkley Square in Tandang Sora, Commonwealth, QC.

CAFÉ ADRIATICO Premier at the Remedios Circle, By the Bay at Baywalk on Roxas Blvd. and Westgate in Alabang feature a special Lenten offering, the "Bacalao a la Vizcaina," usually served with French bread. Ang Bistro sa Remedios and Café Havana Malate will be open only for dinner on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Regular business hours will resume on Black Saturday. Ang Hang, Bollywood, Café Havana Greenbelt, Café Adriatico Libis and Gateway will be closed on Thurday and Friday only. Café Adriatico Westgate and By the Bay will have egg hunting and balloon twisting with magic clowns for kids on Easter. Kids will also get bags of goodies. Call 5222593.

Slim down with a good cup of coffee... and wear that two-piece bikini!

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Slimming Coffee

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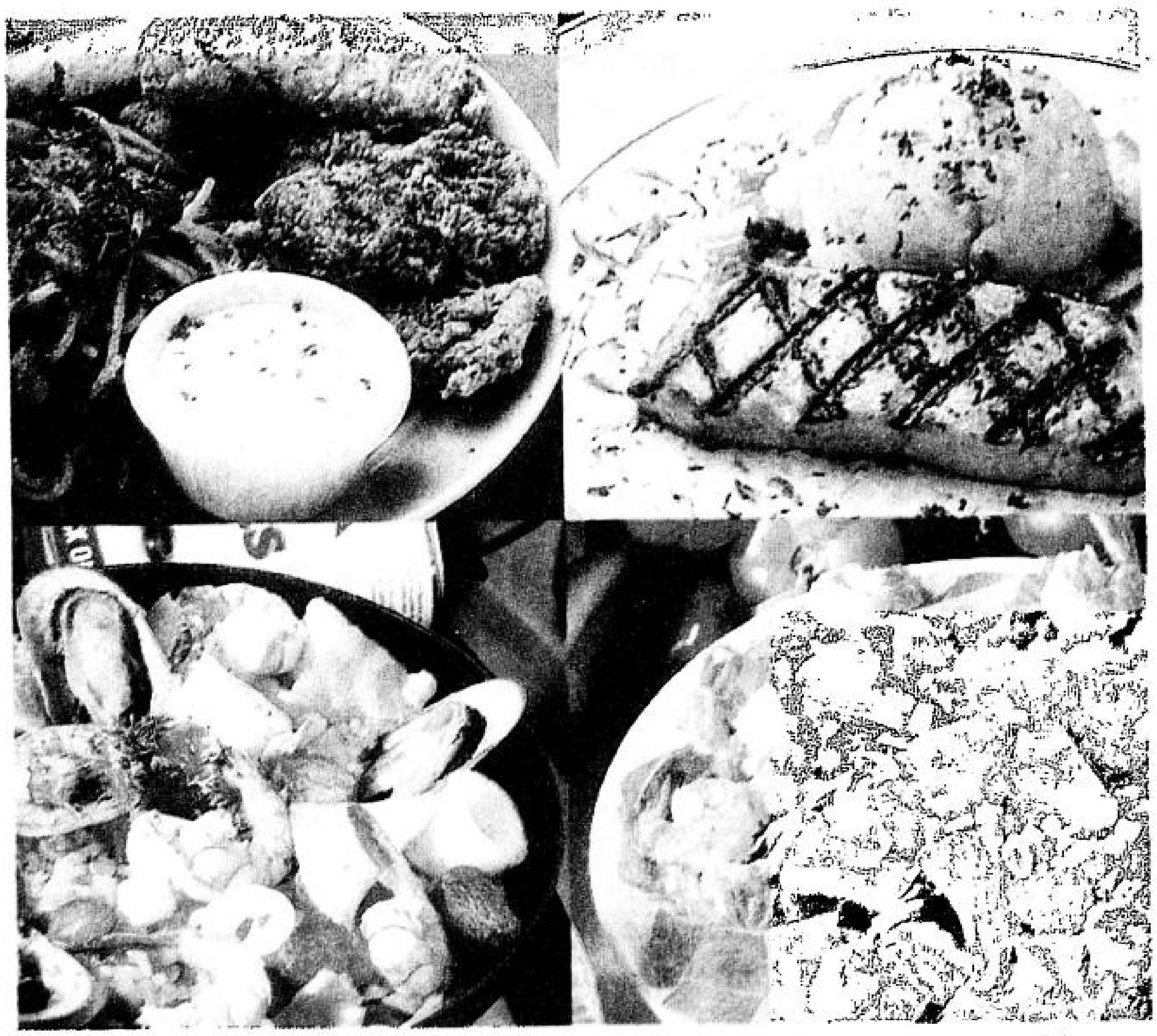
BFAD APPROVED

Slimming
Bavarian



BURGOO offers seafood dishes such as (clockwise from top left): Friday Fish Fry, Spinach Grilled Salmon, Shrimp Pomelo Salad and Seafood Jambalaya. Also on the menu are Lemon Peppered Grilled Lapu-Lapu, Spinach Grilled Salmon, Shrimp Pomelo Salad, Seafood Caesar Salad and Seafood Jambalaya. Buy any three and get one free dish.

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1. MAR. 28 - APR. 1 // 8:00AM - 5:30PM - SPECIAL BAKING - P13,500.
For whole courses or Learn to make 30 Kinds of special cakes from around the world. Each cake has a different icing & decoration.
NEXT SCHED: APR. 25 - 29
2. MAR. 31 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - TAPAS - P3,000.
Spanish Omelette, Fish Pastries, Potato & Ham Croquettes, Pescado frito, Albondigas, Ensalada de Pollo & Mallocan Pizza
NEXT SCHED: APR. 16
3. APR. 2 // 8:00AM - 12:00NN - SUGAR FREE 2 - P3,000.
Brownie Supreme, Choco Chiffon, Orange Chiffon, Banana Pecan, Cookies, Spiced Raisin Cookies, Chewy Golden Cookies. Baking for Diabetics
NEXT SCHED: APR. 30
4. APR. 2 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - EDIBLE GELATIN FLOWERS W/O SUGAR - P2,500.
NEXT SCHED: APR. 29
5. APR. 4 - 8 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - MASTER COURSE IN CAKE DECORATING - P10,500.
Learn the practical & easy method of making icing flowers, borders, scrolls & strings, cake designing, sugar molding, color flow, color technique, wedding cake assembly
NEXT SCHED : MAY 2 - 5
6. APR. 9 // 8:00AM - 12:00NN - MUFFINS - MUFFINS - P3,000
Cinnamon - Crunch Sweet Potato, Onion & Shallots, Country Apple Sauce, Choco Chip, Carrot Nut, Banana Walnut Muffins.
NEXT SCHED: MAY 7
7. APR. 11 - 14 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - ADVANCED GUMPASTE & FOREIGN METHOD - P10,500.
NEXT SCHED: MAY 9 - 13
8. APR. 13 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - NEW METHOD ON FONDANT - P4,500.
Using lace mats, New Rolling Pin w/ Designs, Swags & Ribbons, Non-Stick boards w/ Flowers & Veiners & Quilting.
NEXT SCHED: MAY 11
9. APR. 16 // 8:00AM - 12:00NN - SUGAR FREE BAKING 1 - P3,000.
Banana, Apple Almond, Bars, Carrot Cake, Choco Nut Cake, Whole Wheat Bread, Raisin Bread
NEXT SCHED: MAY 14
10. APR. 18 - 22 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - BASIC COMMERCIAL BAKING - P12,500. (for whole courses)
P2,500 - APR. 18 - Cakes: plain, mocha, choco, orange chiffon cakes, pound cake, sponge cake, moist choco cake, mamon
P2,500 - APR. 19 - Cakes & Roll: malacañang roll, chocolate roll, taisan, brownies, pineapple upside-down, custard cake.
P2,750 - APR. 20 - Breads: pan de sal, dinner rolls, buns, pan de coco, ensaymada, honey bread & white bread.
P2,500 - APR. 21 - Pies: Buko pie, custard pie, pineapple pie, apple pie, mango pie, empanada
P2,750 - APR. 22 - Pastries & Cookies: caramel tart, almond tart, San Nicolas cookies, camachile, lengua de gato, coconut macaroons.
NEXT SCHED: MAY. 16 - 20
11. APR. 18 - 22 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - COLD PORCELAIN FLOWER COURSES WITH PORCELAIN RECIPE - P4,500.
(Each set is lesson covered for one day) - a) Sampaguita, Sunflower, Waling-waling, b) Rose, Catlleya, Cymbidium, c) Magnolia, Gerbera, Lilies, d) Open Rose, Hydrangeas, Grapes, e) Mask or Maskara - of your choice
COLD PORCELAIN DOLLS for appointment
NEXT SCHED: MAY 16 - 20

AVAIL OF THE FIRST PHILIPPINE CAKE DECORATING BOOKS
"THE PHILIPPINE FLOWERS IN SUGAR & CELEBRATION BOOK 1,"
"CAKE TOPS WITH PHILIPPINE FLAIR BOOK 2,"
"CAKE COLLECTION BOOK 3,"
"A GOLDEN CELEBRETION IN COLD PORCELAIN BOOK 4,"
KITCHEN AID COLORED ELEC MIXER, DEHUMIDIFIER, FOOD PROCESSOR,
2005 WILTON BOOK (LIMITED STOCKS ONLY)

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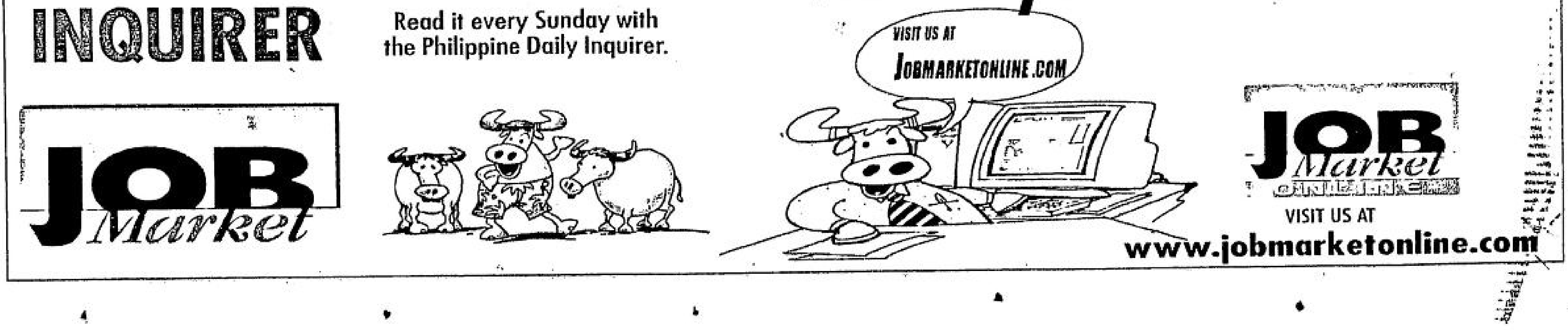
"THE OFFICIAL CONFECTIONER SUGAR" USED BY MRS. FLORENDO



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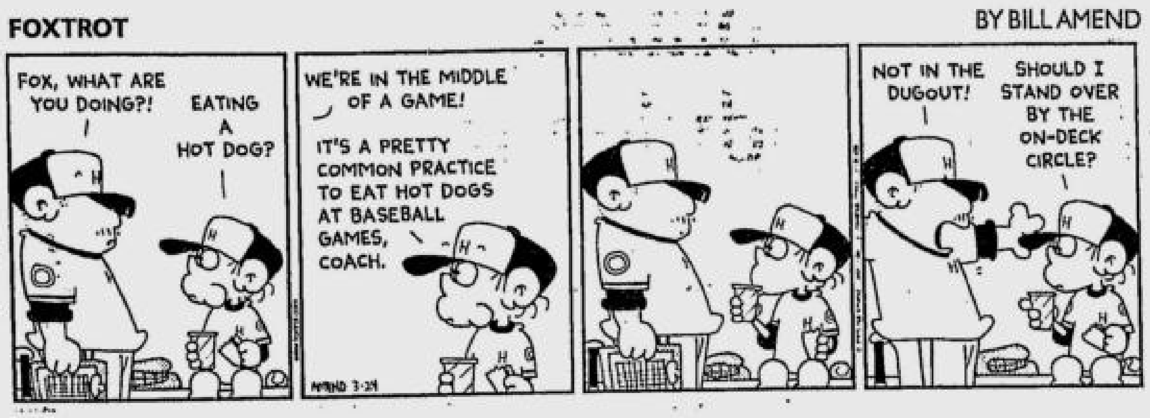
THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2005

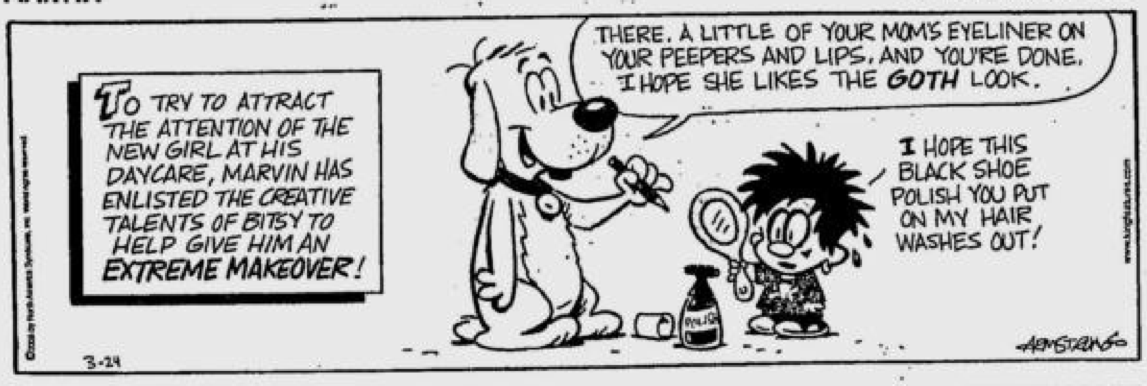
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


FOX, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
EATING A HOT DOG?
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A GAME!
IT'S A PRETTY COMMON PRACTICE TO EAT HOT DOGS AT BASEBALL GAMES, COACH.
NOT IN THE DUGOUT!
SHOULD I STAND OVER BY THE ON-DECK CIRCLE?
AMEND 3-24

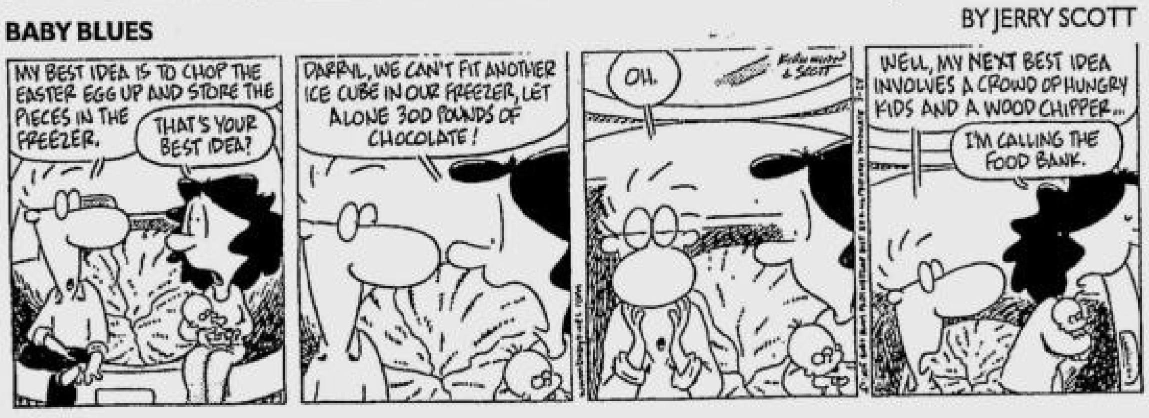
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


TO TRY TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF THE NEW GIRL AT HIS DAYCARE, MARVIN HAS ENLISTED THE CREATIVE TALENTS OF BITSY TO HELP GIVE HIM AN EXTREME MAKEOVER!
THERE. A LITTLE OF YOUR MOM'S EYELINER ON YOUR PEEPERS AND LIPS, AND YOU'RE DONE. I HOPE SHE LIKES THE GOTH LOOK.
I HOPE THIS BLACK SHOE POLISH YOU PUT ON MY HAIR WASHES OUT!
3-24
ARMSTRONG

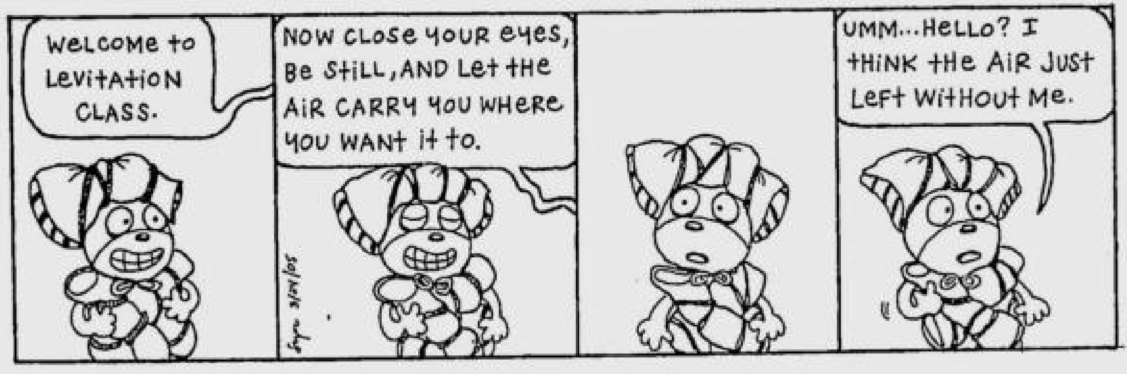
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


MY BEST IDEA IS TO CHOP THE EASTER EGG UP AND STORE THE PIECES IN THE FREEZER.
THAT'S YOUR BEST IDEA?
DARRYL, WE CAN'T FIT ANOTHER ICE CUBE IN OUR FREEZER, LET ALONE 300 POUNDS OF CHOCOLATE!
OH.
Kirkman & Scott
WELL, MY NEXT BEST IDEA INVOLVES A CROWD OF HUNGRY KIDS AND A WOOD CHIPPER...
I'M CALLING THE FOOD BANK.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Welcome to Levitation class.
Now close your eyes, Be still, and let the Air carry you where you want it to.
Umm...Hello? I think the Air just left without me.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You appreciate simplicity. This doesn't mean you aren't deep, because you are. You live your life in broad strokes, generally avoiding entanglements. (But if high drama finds you, you don't back down.) You are modest, even shy. You're realistic, honest and open. Expect increased solitude in the year ahead for study or learning something new.
Birthdate of: Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poet; David Suzuki, environmentalist; Star Jones, TV personality.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have excellent, practical ideas at work today. One thing you have to watch out for, however, is that later in the day you could be drawn into a political or religious argument.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a good day to make long-term plans related to children and their care or education. Similarly, you might want to decide how something is shared between you and a romantic connection.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a good day to get things done at home. Discussions with family members can be productive and yield good results. (You're taking a long-range view of things.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): No matter what you do today, you want practical results. You want to do things in the most thrifty, efficient way possible. You don't want to waste anything.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): If you buy something today, it will be practical, useful and will no doubt last a long time. In fact, you feel pleased with yourself about your purchases.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): An older or more experienced friend will give you good advice today. I advise you to listen. Avoid arguments with family members. It isn't worth it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): If you work steadily at something alone or behind the scenes, others will appreciate your efforts. However, don't be bullheaded about what you're doing.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Experts or people who know more than you do about something have something to say today. You might as well listen. (Just don't squat with your spurs on.)

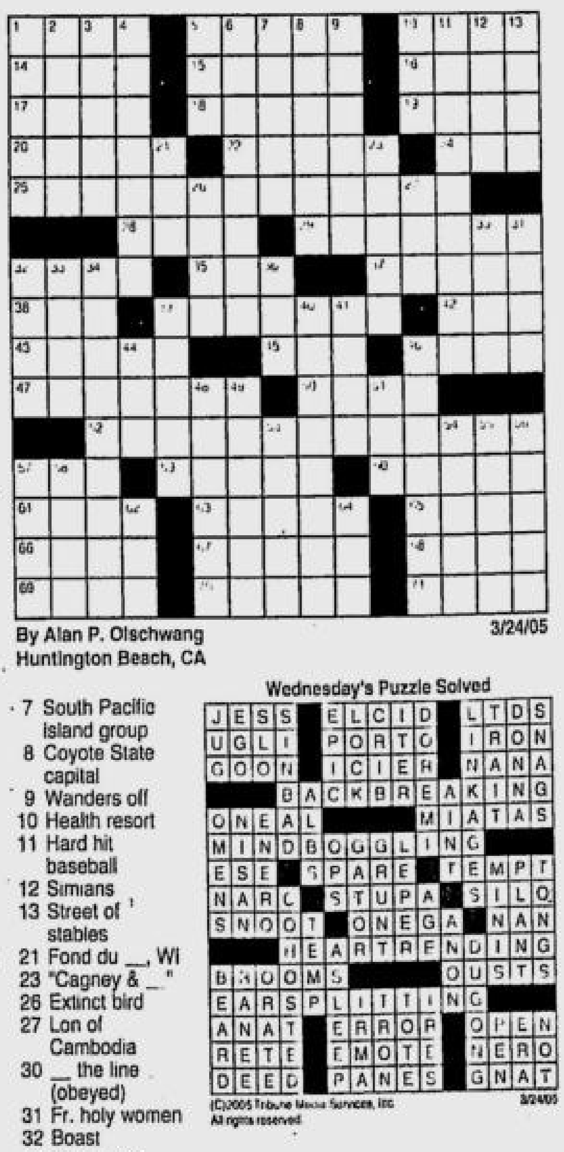
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a good day to talk to parents and authority figures about how to best use the resources that are available to you. However, be patient and listen.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a good day to discuss travel arrangements or matters related to publishing, the media and higher education with your partner or friend. Figure out what you want to do.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Somebody might have a good idea about how you can function on less today. Listen to tips about how to streamline things at work.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You will take your responsibilities regarding children or their education very seriously today. Nevertheless, a parent, teacher or authority figure might disagree with you later.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

3/24/05

ACROSS
1 Sugar source
5 Coarse files
10 Bridge coup
14 Idyllic meadows
15 Braid
16 Conduit
17 Idle of Monty Python
18 Ancient region on the Euphrates
19 All over again
20 Adversary
22 Fable's lesson
24 First of September?
25 Start of Mae West quote
28 Coll. course
29 Accompanies.
32 Slender nail
35 Excavated
37 George who was Mary
38 Sleep letters
39 Part 2 of quote
42 Victory sign
43 Proficient
45 ___ de mer
46 Cincinnati nine
47 Venice craft
50 Mechanical routine
52 End of quote
57 Take the odds
59 "Oklahoma" aunt
60 Vigilant
61 Bankrupt
63 Henry VIII's last name
65 Actor Morales
66 Territory
67 Plant fungus
68 Narrate
69 Meddlesome
70 Considers
71 Latin being

DOWN
1 Office worker
2 Eagle's home
3 Wet behind the ears
4 Got away
5 Timing meas.
6 Ductile metallic element
7 South Pacific island group
8 Coyote State capital
9 Wanders off
10 Health resort
11 Hard hit baseball
12 Simians
13 Street of stables
21 Fond du ___, WI
23 "Cagney & ___"
26 Extinct bird
27 Lon of Cambodia
30 ___ the line (obeyed)
31 Fr. holy women
32 Boast
33 Make over
34 Pleasantries
36 Ritzy rock
39 "Dred" author
40 Developer's area
41 Medicinal plant
44 L.A. summer hrs.
46 Stuffed full
48 Sang merrily
49 Drawing power
51 Actress Leoni
53 Rock shelf
54 Words of approval
55 Certain graduate exams
56 Functional
57 Whole-grain cereal component
58 Continental currency
62 Vote against
64 Some NFL linemen

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

J	E	S	S	■	E	L	C	I	D	■	L	T	D	S
U	G	L	I	■	P	O	R	T	O	■	I	R	O	N
G	O	O	N	■	I	C	I	E	R	■	N	A	N	A
■	■	■	B	A	C	K	B	R	E	A	K	I	N	G
O	N	E	A	L	■	■	■	■	M	I	A	T	A	S
M	I	N	D	B	O	G	G	L	I	N	G	■	■	■
E	S	E	■	S	P	A	R	E	■	T	E	M	P	T
N	A	R	C	■	S	T	U	P	A	■	S	I	L	O
S	N	O	O	T	■	O	N	E	G	A	■	N	A	N
■	■	■	H	E	A	R	T	R	E	N	D	I	N	G
B	R	O	O	M	S	■	■	■	■	O	U	S	T	S
E	A	R	S	P	L	I	T	T	I	N	G	■	■	■
A	N	A	T	■	E	R	R	O	R	■	O	P	E	N
R	E	T	E	■	E	M	O	T	E	■	N	E	R	O
D	E	E	D	■	P	A	N	E	S	■	G	N	A	T

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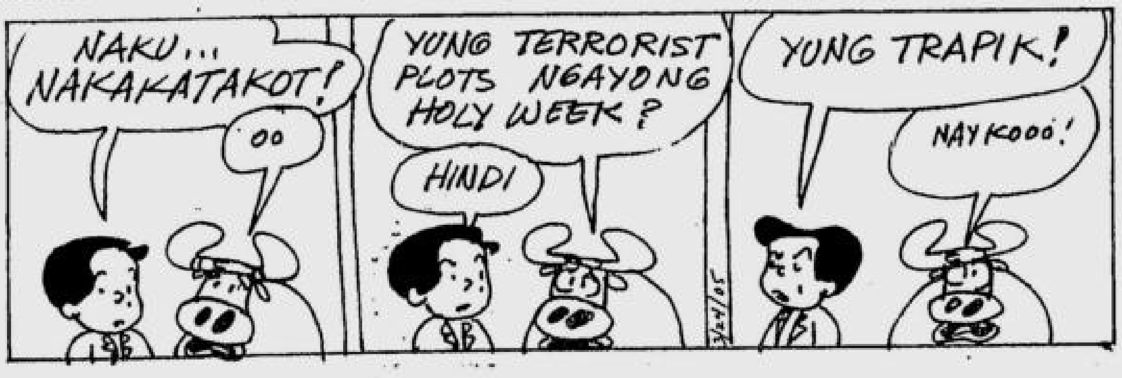
3/24/05

GASFAR
fuel saving tips
PLAN DIRECT ROUTES
Try to curtail unnecessary side trips, reduce the number of stops and starts, keep a steady touch on the accelerator pedal as traffic conditions allow.

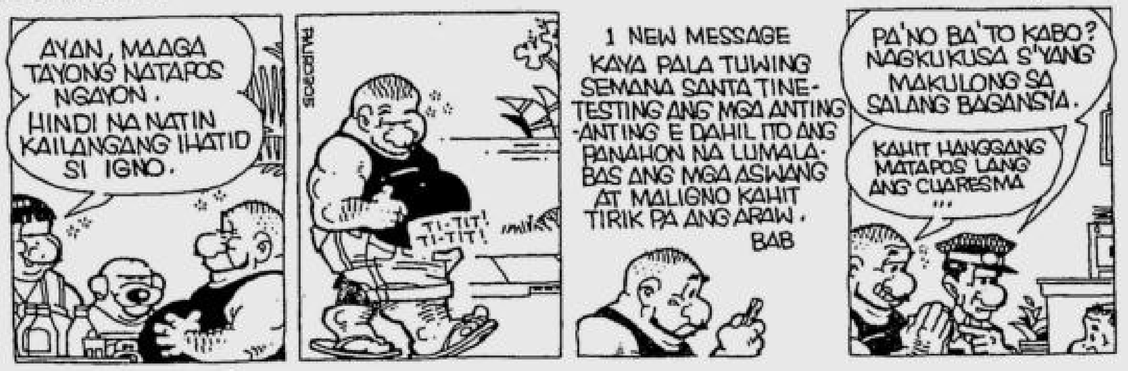
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAKU... NAKAKATAKOT!
OO
YUNG TERRORIST PLOTS NGAYONG HOLY WEEK?
HINDI
YUNG TRAPIK!
NAYKOOO!

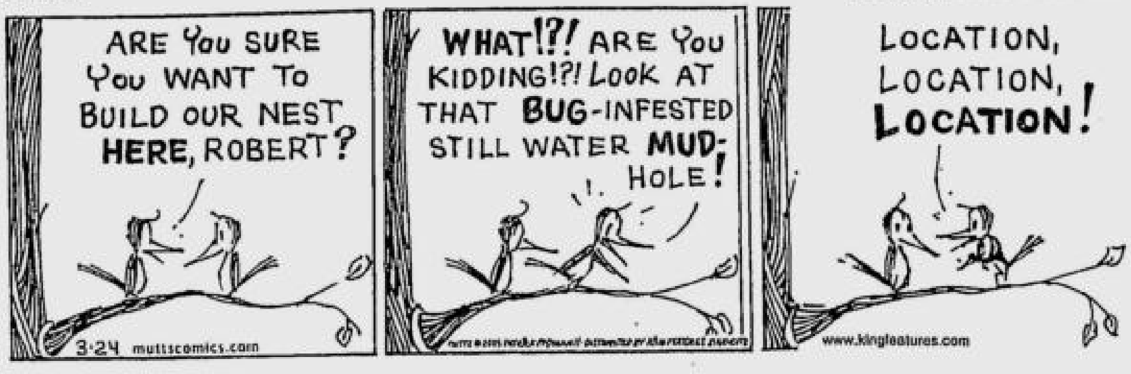
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


AYAN, MAAGA TAYONG NATAPOS NGAYON.
HINDI NA NATIN KAILANGANG IHATID SI IGNO.
TI-TIT! TI-TIT!
1 NEW MESSAGE
KAYA PALA TUWING SEMANA SANTA TINE-TESTING ANG MGA ANTING-ANTING E DAHIL ITO ANG PANAHON NA LUMALABAS ANG MGA ASWANG AT MALIGNO KAHIT TIRIK PA ANG ARAW. BAB
PA'NO BA 'TO KABO? NAGKUKUSA S'YANG MAKULONG SA SALANG BAGANSYA.
KAHIT HANGGANG MATAPOS LANG ANG CUARESMA...

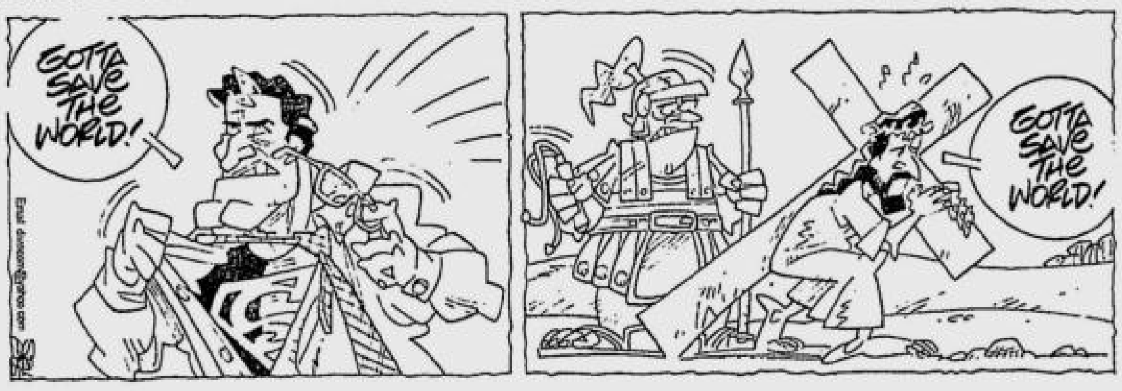
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO BUILD OUR NEST HERE, ROBERT?
WHAT!?! ARE YOU KIDDING!?! LOOK AT THAT BUG-INFESTED STILL WATER MUD-HOLE!
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!
3·24 muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com

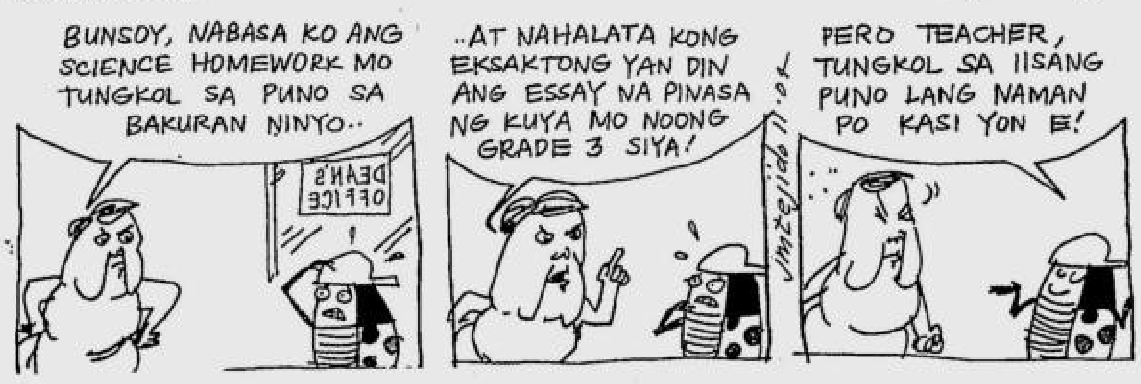
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


GOTTA SAVE THE WORLD!
GOTTA SAVE THE WORLD!

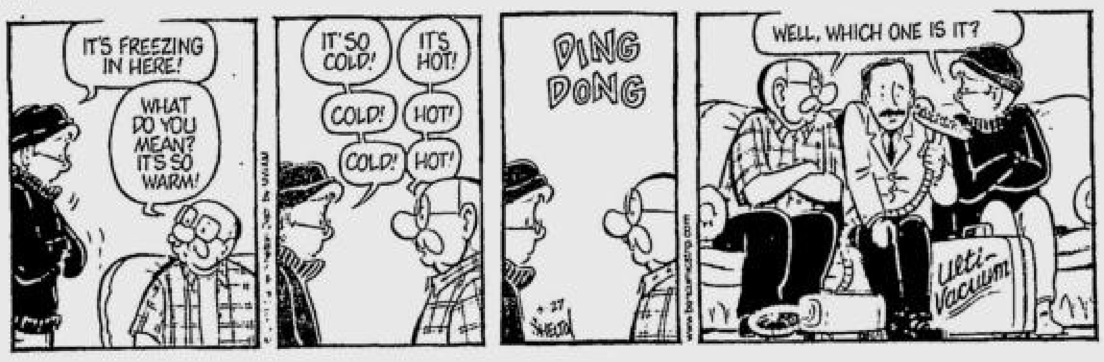
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BUNSOY, NABASA KO ANG SCIENCE HOMEWORK MO TUNGKOL SA PUNO SA BAKURAN NINYO..
DEAN'S OFFICE
..AT NAHALATA KONG EKSAKTONG YAN DIN ANG ESSAY NA PINASA NG KUYA MO NOONG GRADE 3 SIYA!
PERO TEACHER, TUNGKOL SA IISANG PUNO LANG NAMAN PO KASI YON E!

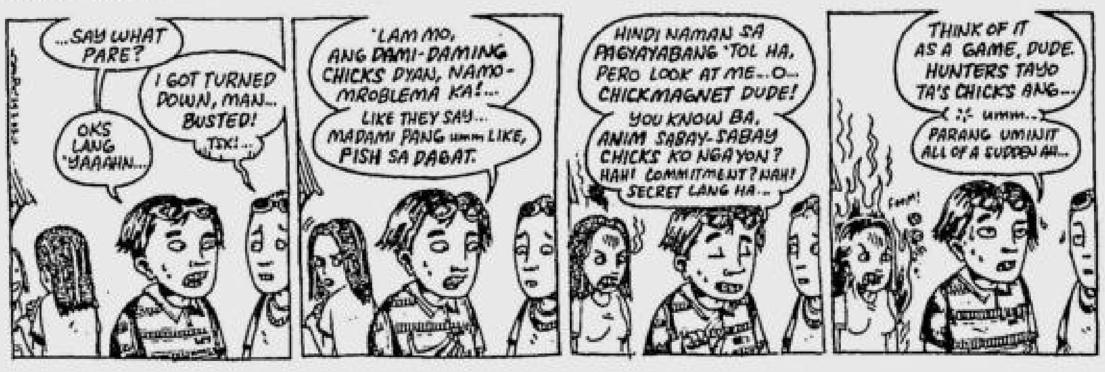
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


IT'S FREEZING IN HERE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IT'S SO WARM!
IT'S SO COLD!
IT'S HOT!
COLD!
HOT!
COLD!
HOT!
DING DONG
WELL, WHICH ONE IS IT?
Ulti-Vacuum

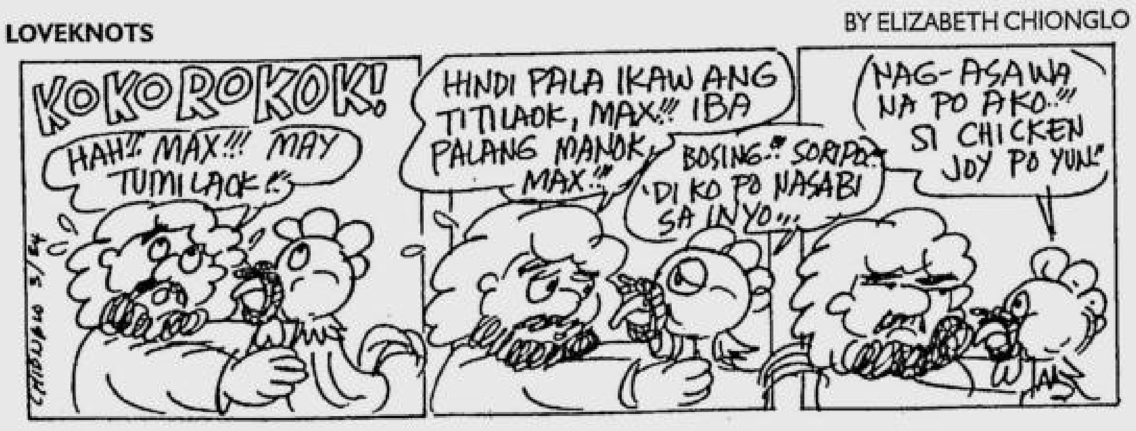
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


...SAY WHAT PARE?
I GOT TURNED DOWN, MAN... BUSTED! TSK!...
OKS LANG 'YAAAHN...
'LAM MO, ANG DAMI-DAMING CHICKS DYAN, NAMOMROBLEMA KA!...
LIKE THEY SAY... MADAMI PANG umm LIKE, PISH SA DAGAT.
HINDI NAMAN SA PAGYAYABANG 'TOL HA, PERO LOOK AT ME...O... CHICKMAGNET DUDE!
YOU KNOW BA, ANIM SABAY-SABAY CHICKS KO NGAYON? HAH! COMMITMENT? NAH! SECRET LANG HA...
THINK OF IT AS A GAME, DUDE. HUNTERS TAYO TA'S CHICKS ANG...
umm...
PARANG UMINIT ALL OF A SUDDEN AH...

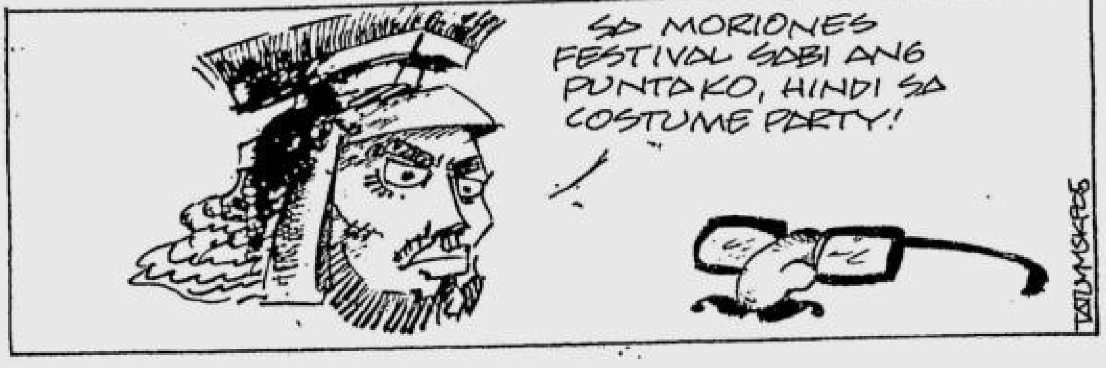
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


KOKOROKOK!
HAH!! MAX!!! MAY TUMILAOK!!
HINDI PALA IKAW ANG TITILAOK, MAX!!! IBA PALANG MANOK, MAX!!
BOSING..! SORI PO.. 'DI KO PO NASABI SA INYO...
NAG-ASAWA NA PO AKO..!! SI CHICKEN JOY PO YUN!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SA MORIONES FESTIVAL SABI ANG PUNTA KO, HINDI SA COSTUME PARTY!

Lipa delicacies, Pen chocolates, Bulacan pigeon and other indulgences

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

Ah, the joy of discovering 'cuchintang puti' at a Batangas public market!

I WAS in Lipa two weekends ago to celebrate the birthday of my nephew Emilio at the beautiful clubhouse of La Finca Farm and Country Resort.

On a trip to the town's public market, which is a must wherever I go, I discovered some of the most delicious Batangas *kakanin*. *Suman* and *puto* in all shapes, colors and sizes, and, to match, some pretty good *barako* coffee beans.

I even sampled freshly cooked *empanadas* that I thought was yummy. But what took my fancy was the *cuchintang puti*—white *cuchinta* with coconut milk served with a *kalamay hati* sauce! This made my trip to Lipa! Not to mention that I handpicked lettuce at La Finca, made a lovely salad with shaved *tamales* and fried some *tawilis* and served it with pickled romaine. Ahhh! Freshly picked lettuce! What a difference it makes! For a total Lipa experience, call La Finca (Roseanne, 09178994857); for *cuchintang puti*, *empanada*, *suman* and *tamales* call Ninay at 09192425081; for *puto* and *suman*, call Tess, 09102482385

Sweet indulgence 2

Remember the Chocolate Nights Buffet at the Manila Peninsula last year? Well, they're doing it again! If you liked it then, this episode deux i's even better. Seventy percent of the menu is new, and imagine this: Chocolate souffles done right before your very eyes! Executive pastry chef Berndt Beitmann's gustatory experience is not to be missed. It starts April 8 at The Pen Lobby (tel. 8872888 local 2205).

Pigeon

Mayor Ricardo Silverio has once again worked his Midas touch, this time on pigeons bred in his San Rafael Farm in Bulacan. He also brought home a Chinese chef from China who specializes in pigeon marinades. So if you like fried pigeon like those served in Chinese restaurants, this is it for you. Just thaw and deep fry in hot oil until golden brown. It's exceptional and, at P160 apiece, how can you go wrong? (Call Mely at 8193862.)

Karen's Kitchen chocolate cakes

In this hi-tech age, you never really know how important those numbers in your mobile phone are until you lose them. I had lost Karen Kitchen's number and just recently retrieved it. As soon as I did, I just had to order their Chocolate Ganache, a cake I had written about sometime ago. If you haven't tried it, then you must. Only 22,000 calories per serving... so very South Beach appropriate! Too sinful but then again, as the law of nature dictates, the more sinful, the more delicious! (Call 8982880 or 0917-5394968.)

Please give me a recipe for salad with cherry tomatoes? I see cherry tomatoes all the time in the supermarket.

JT OF SAN JUAN

My mom loves to prepare asparagus soup but it's always done the same way—with shredded chicken flakes. Any suggestions?

MARIPI Q

These recipes for cherry tomato salad and asparagus soup are from Diamond Hotel executive chef Raymond Braun, whose recipes for the dishes he served during my birthday dinner I started sharing with readers last week. Chef Braun makes a mean salad of cherry tomatoes and avocado with red wine vinaigrette, roasted garlic flakes and blue cheese. Also, his Puree of Asparagus Soup with Mascarpone Cream is one I'm certain you and your family will enjoy!.

Cherry Tomatoes and Avocado Salad

Salad yield : 1 portion
30 g Romaine lettuce
30 g avocado, peeled & sliced
20 g endive lettuce
35 g blue cheese
5 g fried garlic chips slivered garlic fried in oil until golden
1 g fresh basil leaves
20 g tomatoes, cherry
Red wine vinaigrette (2 tbsp red wine vinegar, 2 tbsp olive oil, ½ tsp thyme or oregano, salt and pepper to taste—whisk ingredients to emulsify)

Prepare lettuce leaves. Break endives into bite-size pieces and place on top of the romaine. Add the cherry tomatoes around. Add blue cheese chunks on top. Drizzle with red wine vinaigrette. Decorate with basil leaves and chopped chives. Add the garlic chips on top.

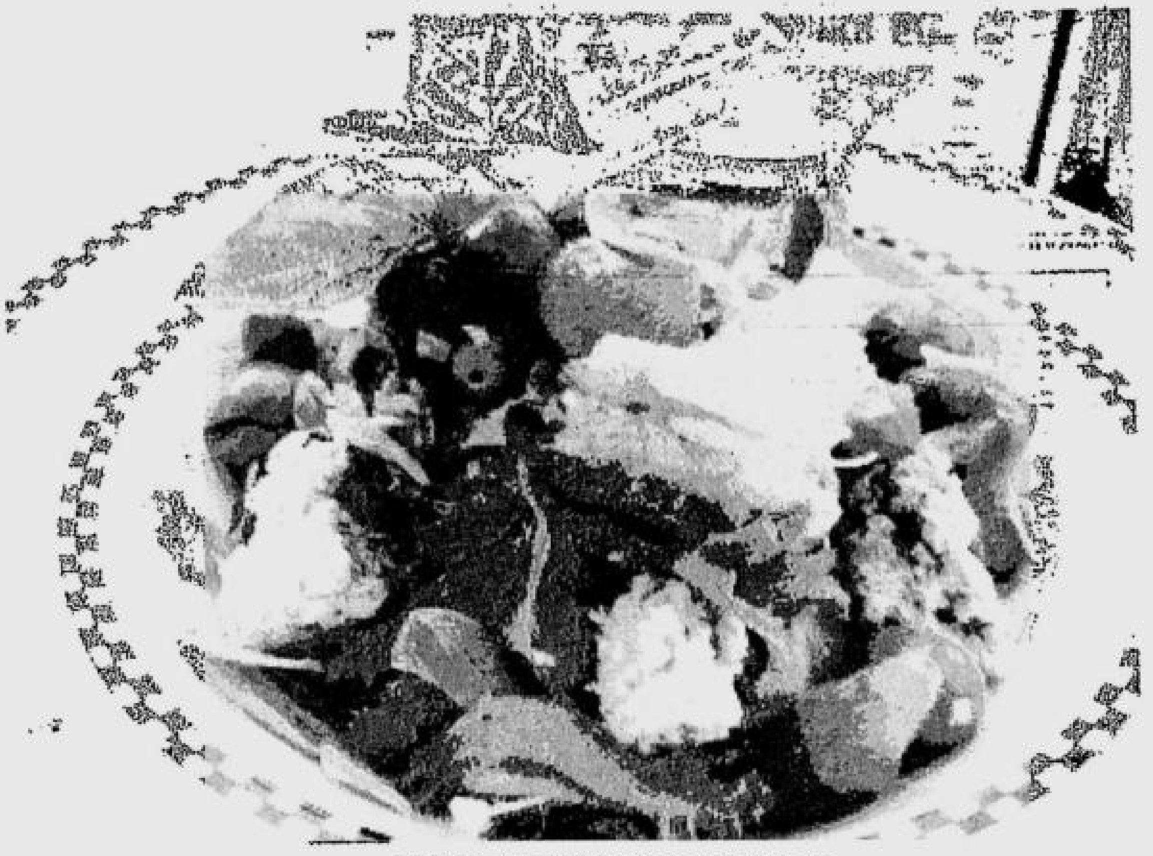
Puree of Asparagus Soup with Mascarpone Cream

Soup - Yield 2 Liters
500 g asparagus, cut
400 g potatoes
2 ltr. chicken stock
400 ml cream
100 g butter
2 g salt
1 g black pepper, grounded
150 g shallots, sliced
50 ml olive oil

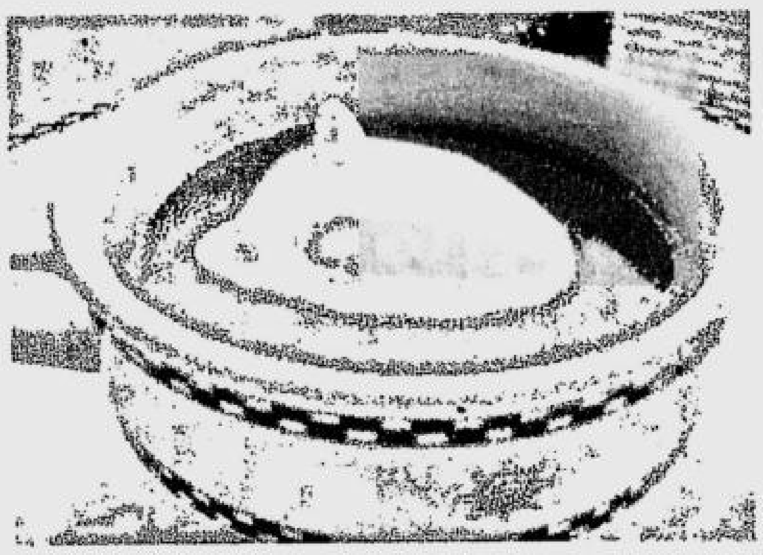
Sauté shallots in hot olive oil. Add asparagus, but keep some of the tips for garnish. Sweat asparagus a bit and pour in stock. Add potato and let it simmer till tender. Put in a blender and strain. Boil and add cream, reducing a bit as necessary. Adjust seasoning.

For the individual portion:
180 ml soup
10 g beaten cream
10 g mascarpone cheese

Mix cream and the mascarpone cheese. Pour the hot soup into soup cup. Top with a big dollop of cheese mixture.



SALAD of cherry tomatoes and avocado



ASPARAGUS purée soup with mascarpone cream

Spanish cooking terms 6

Pachero - stew pot
Parilla (a la) - grilled
Paella - Rice cooked on a paellera
Paellera - a distinct metal pan used to cook paella
Pescados y Mariscos - fish & shellfish
Picadillo - Sauce if chopped ingredients
Pil-pil - sauce of oil and garlic, emulsified by shaking fish in pan to release gelatinous substance in fish, done with bacalao
Pimiento - sweet red pepper
Pimienton - paprika

For comments or suggestions, text 0917-8399888.

GINGER Pampano

PAMPANO Bicol Express

Four original pampano recipes

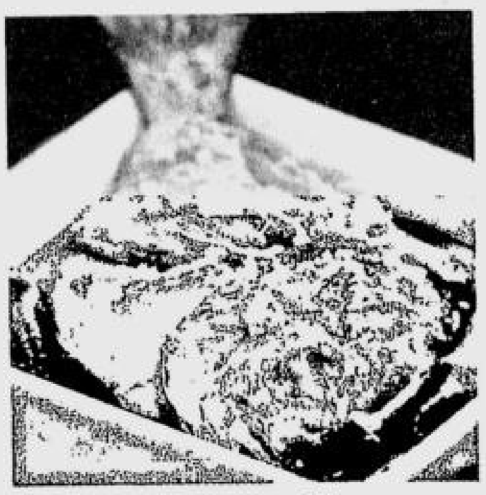
RENOWNED food expert Cecilia Kalaw, popularly known as "Tita Cely," has come up with four original, easy-to-prepare recipes for *pampano*, one of the most prized food fishes worldwide.

The much in demand *pampano* is now grown commercially in General Santos City in Mindanao, and Bataan and Mindoro through Fishta, an aquaculture program of Santeh Feeds Corporation.

Kalaw, credited with the popular and very spicy Bicol Express, runs the Tita Cely Sinigang Bar at the Market! Market! at The Fort.

Call 7473731 or 0917- 8472631. E-mail riz2sjuan@yahoo.com.

PAMPANO in Gata with Turmeric Ginger



SINIGANG na Pampano sa Miso

Pampano in Gata with Turmeric Ginger

2 c *kakang gata*
¼ c vinegar *siling haba*
garlic
1 tbsp rock salt
black pepper
yellow ginger

Mix garlic, yellow ginger, black pepper, salt, vinegar and fish in a pot and boil. When half-cooked add the coconut milk, *siling haba* and simmer until cooked.

Sinigang na Pampano sa Miso

2 pcs tomatoes, sliced
2 cloves garlic
½ *mustasa*
1 tbsp *sinigang* powder
1 medium onion, sliced
100 g *miso*
2 pcs *siling haba*
1 medium-sized Pampano (cut into two)

Sauté garlic, onion, tomato and *miso*. Put four cups of water, add the pampano and boil.

Add the *mustasa*, *sinigang* powder and *siling haba*. Simmer until cooked.

Pampano Bicol Express

2 c *kakang gata*
¼ c vinegar
siling haba
garlic
1 tbsp rock salt
black pepper
ginger

Mix garlic, ginger, black pepper, salt, vinegar and fish in a pot and boil. When half-cooked add the coconut milk, *siling haba* and simmer until cooked.

Ginger Pampano

1 whole pampano
ginger, finely chopped
Thai fish sauce (*patis*)
leeks, finely chopped
olive oil

Steam the fish. Sauté the chopped leeks and ginger in olive oil. Add Thai fish sauce, and wait until the mixture is cooked.

To serve: Top the steamed fish with the sautéed chopped leeks and ginger.

Identity theft is a growing problem

THE CONSUMER
Marietta Velasco Giron

WAIT till you read about what I saw the other day.

As I was walking along a busy section of San Juan, I saw scavengers sorting out the contents of their pushcarts. Plastics, glasses and metals were thrown into boxes.

But what intrigued me were neatly stacked bills and receipts in one of the boxes. They had the familiar logos of the Manila Electric Company, Globe, Manila Water Company and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company.

One of the scavengers told me that "someone was going to buy the bills and receipts" from them.

I did not ask any further. It was obvious that names, addresses, and other personal information on the receipts would be used and users might include what were known as "identity thieves" or persons who collected this type of sensitive information that could be used in scams.

Not so long ago, the telephone directory was the most convenient source for this type of information. Then came the sophisticated swiping gadget, which the ID thieves used to decode and copy information from the magnetic strip at the back of credit and automated teller machine (ATM) cards.

And now we hear of resourceful ID theft rings that cull sensitive personal information from bank and credit card accounts, Social Security System documents, club membership records, collection agencies, etc. The Internet is the most convenient source, but so are unscrupulous employees in the bank, collection agencies and insurance companies.

Evidently, ID thieves don't leave any stone unturned, so to speak. They also scan used raffle stubs! When I heard this from a concerned consumer, I asked a Shoe Mart information officer what was done with raffle stubs at the end of the store's regular promos.

"At SM, the disposal of raffle stubs is centralized—one group melts the stubs," wrote the officer.

So, next time you fill out forms requiring information about yourself, don't give out more than what is needed. Remember also to advise the house help not to give out private information to telephone callers or people who claim they are from some agency or another.

Serious crime

Unfortunately, we poor consumers in the Philippines are vulnerable to identity theft because there's no specific law to protect us. In the United States, it is considered a serious crime. Last year alone, of the more than 653,000 complaints received by the US Federal Trade Commission, some 39 percent was related to identity theft.

By the way, the theme of the national consumer protection week held in the US in February centered on preventing identity theft.

Check fraud at DepEd

A former schoolteacher (name withheld) doesn't know where to report the theft of her benefit check representing benefits due her from the Department of Education (DepEd).

She arrived recently from the United States after being informed that she could claim the check she had been expecting from DepEd. However, when she got to the department, she was told that somebody had already claimed the check. The person presented all necessary documents to prove she was the legitimate claimant.

Send consumer complaints and comments to giron@mailstation.nettion.net

SMART GOLD
Here's to hope, reflection, and enlightenment.

SMART Gold brings you 3 inspiring services for the Holy Week.

Receive messages that can be sources of hope and inspiration. Or, be food for thought as you reflect on life this coming Holy Week.

- **Dear God**
  Text H1 to 4636.
  Receive Bible verses or religious-themed messages.

SMS MESSAGES

To give love to the unlovely, the unloving, and the unlovable is to follow the path of Jesus. Are you following Him? GOD LOVES U!

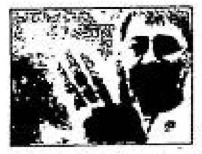
The more you do the deeds of God, the more you radiate His beauty. What could be more beautiful than God's reflection? GOD LOVES U!

If you want to learn how to love better, start with a person who you hate. The more you hate the person, the better you will love. GOD LOVES U!

- **Soul Kit**
  Text H2 to 4636.
  Subscribe to this service to receive reflective messages by renowned spiritual writer/speaker, Bro. Bo Sanchez.

MMS MESSAGES

I believe that for many people, our financial problems are not due to a lack of money-but rather are a result of mishandling our money...

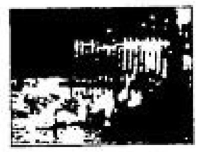


Let me give you an obvious example: If someone has at the core of his being this belief that says, "God is a stingy God", do you think he will experience a lot of blessings in his life?...

ONE DAY, I visited a young friend in the hospital who was dying from lung cancer. Praying beside him as he labored in his breathing was very difficult for me...

- **Daily Inspirations**
  Text H3 to 4636.
  Subscribe to this service to receive inspirational stories with images.

MMS MESSAGES



As you got up this morning, I watched you, and hoped you talk to me, even if it was just a few words, asking my opinion or thanking me, for something good that happened in your life yesterday...

I asked God to take away my pride. God said "No".
It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up.
I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. God said "No". Her spirit was whole...

Sometimes people come into your life and you know right away that they are meant to be there, they serve some sort of purpose, teach you a lesson or help figure out who you are and who you want to become...

For more info, text H4 to 4636.

Text HOLY to 4636.

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I ♥ SMART Simply Amazing!

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